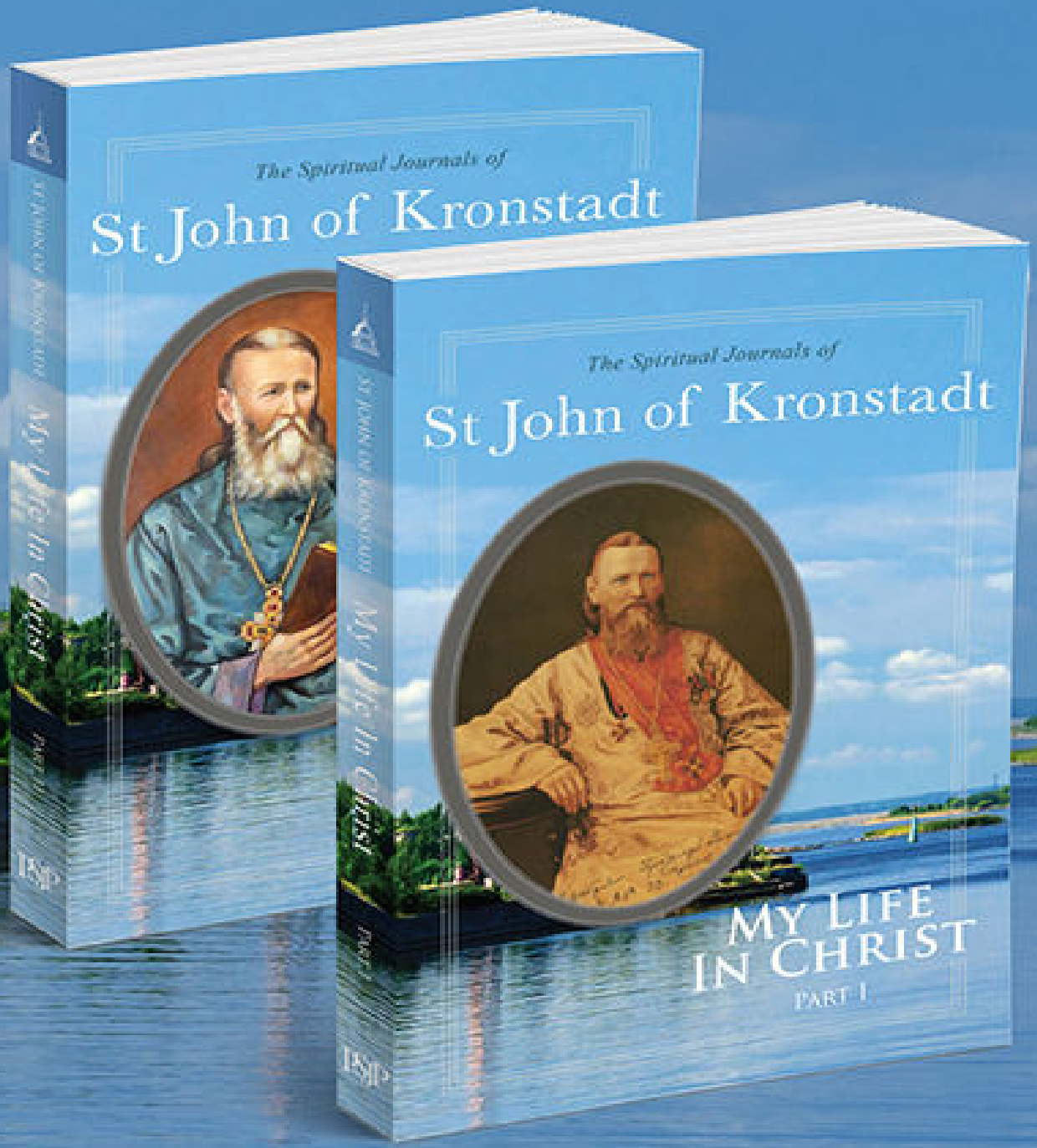
My Life In Christ



Parts I and II

The Spiritual Journals of

St John of Kronstadt

My Life In Christ

Part I

My Life In Christ

The Spiritual Journals
of
St John of Kronstadt

(Archpriest Ivan Ilyich Sergiev)

Part 1

Revised and adapted (with reference to the original Russian text)

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Preface

I do not precede my book with any introduction: let it speak for itself. Everything contained in it is nothing less than the inspiration of grace within my soul, bestowed by the all-enlightening Holy Spirit during moments of deep attentiveness and self-examination, and especially during prayer. When I had time, I wrote down the grace-filled thoughts and feelings that came to me, and from these notes, continued for many years, this book has now been compiled; the contents are quite *varied*, as will be seen by the readers. Let them judge for themselves.

But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one (1 Cor 2:15).

Archpriest Ivan Sergiev

PART I

My Life In Christ

And this is eternal life, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (John 17:3).

You, O God, have opened wide to me Your truth and Your righteousness. By instructing me in the natural sciences, You have opened to me all the riches of faith, of human nature, and of human reason; I have learned Your word—the word of Love—"*piercing even to the division of soul and spirit*" (Heb 4:12). I have studied the workings of man's mind, his love of wisdom, the formation and the beauty of speech. I have penetrated in part into the mysteries and laws of Nature, into the mystery of the creation of this world and the laws governing it. I learned about the population of our planet; I have acquainted myself with its different peoples, with historical luminaries and their works who have passed in turn through this world. I have begun to study the great science of self-knowledge and of how to draw closer to You; in a word, I have learned many, many things—"*for things beyond human insight have been shown to you*" (Sir 3:22.), and I have a great deal yet to learn. I own many books in many different genres; I have read and re-read them, but still I am not satisfied. My spirit still thirsts for further knowledge and my heart is not content; it hungers, and from all the knowledge thus acquired by the intellect, it cannot find consolation. When will it be satisfied? It will only be satisfied when "*in righteousness shall I appear before Thy face; when Thy glory is revealed, I shall be satisfied*" (Psalm 16:15). Until then, I shall continue to hunger. "*Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life*" (John 4:13–14), said the Lord.

How is it that the saints see us and our needs and hear our prayers? Let us make the following comparison: suppose that you were suddenly transported to the sun and were united to it. The sun lights the whole earth with its rays; it illuminates every grain of sand on the earth. In these rays you also see the earth, but you are so small in proportion to the sun, that

you would form, so to speak, only one ray, and there are an infinite number of such rays. By association with the sun, each ray is intimately involved in the sun's illumination of the whole world. So also the saintly soul, having become united to God, its spiritual sun, sees all men and the needs of those that pray, through the mediation of the spiritual sun that lights the whole universe.

* * *

Have you learned to see God before you at all times, as ever-present Reason, as the living, dynamic Word, as the Life-giving Holy Spirit? The Holy Scripture is the domain of Reason, Word, and Spirit, of the Triune God. In Scripture, He clearly manifests Himself: "*The words that I have spoken to you—they are full of the Spirit and life*" (John 6:63), said the Lord. The writings of the Holy Fathers are also the expression of the hypostatic Reason, Word, and Spirit, in synergy with the spirit of mankind. The writings of ordinary worldly men, on the other hand, are the expression of the fallen spirit of mankind, with its attachment to sin, evil habits, and passions. In the Holy Scriptures we see God face to face, and ourselves as we are. Man, come to know yourself through them, and walk always as in the presence of God.

You yourselves can see that man, in his word, does not die; he is immortal in it, and it will speak after his death. I shall die, but shall continue to speak even after my death. How much of this immortal word remains among the living, left behind by those who have died long ago! Sometimes this word still lives in the mouths of an entire people! How enduring is the word even of one ordinary man! Still more so is the Word of God. It will survive beyond all time, and will live and act forever.

* * *

Since God is the creative, living and life-creating Thought, those people who in their thoughts turn aside from the hypostatic Thought and occupy themselves with earthly, perishable things sin greatly by making their spirit also earthly and perishable. Especially sinful are those who allow their minds to turn away from God and wander in different places outside the church, either during the divine service or in their personal prayers. They greatly offend God, upon Whom our minds should be fixed.

* * *

What is the point of fasting and prayer? Why must we work so hard? They cleanse us from sin, they lead to spiritual peace, to union with God, to sonship, to boldness before God. There are truly important reasons for fasting and confessing from the bottom of one's heart. Immeasurable rewards will be given for conscientious labor. Do many of us love God as a son loves a father? How many of us dare, without condemnation and with boldness, call upon the Father in Heaven and say: "Our Father"? Is it not the exact opposite? Our hearts, deadened by the vanities of this world and attachments to its objects and pleasures, are incapable of crying out with a son's voice. Is not our Heavenly Father distant from our hearts? Should not we rather imagine a vengeful God, since we have left Him to go into a far-away land? Yes, because of our sins, all of us are worthy of His righteous anger and punishment, and it is wonderful how long-suffering and forbearing He is to us: He does not uproot us like the barren fig trees. Let us hasten to propitiate Him with repentance and tears. Let us enter into ourselves; let us consider our unclean hearts in all strictness, and we will see what a multitude of impurities hinders the reach of divine grace. Only then will we realize that we are spiritually dead.

* * *

The loving Lord is here: how can I allow even a shadow of evil to enter my heart? Let all evil completely die within me; let my heart be anointed with the sweet fragrance of goodness. Let God's love conquer you, hateful Satan, who pushes us toward habitual evil. Evil is fatal both to the mind and to the body. It burns, it crushes, and it tortures. No one bound by evil will dare to approach the throne of the God of love.

* * *

When praying, we must absolutely subjugate our heart and turn it toward God. It must be neither cold, crafty, untruthful, nor double-dealing; otherwise, what will be the use of our prayers, of our preparation for the Mysteries? Is it good for us to hear God's angered voice: "*These people drawl near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me*"? (Matt 15:8). Therefore, let us not stand in church in a

state of spiritual apathy, but let the spirit of each one of us on such occasions burn, laboring to strive toward God. Even men do not much value work done listlessly, out of habit. God wants us to give Him our hearts, "*My son, give Me your heart*" (Prov 23:26), because the heart is the most important part of man—his very essence. More than this, the heart is the man himself. Thus, he who does not pray or does not serve God with his whole heart does not pray at all, because in that case only his body prays, and the body without the mind is nothing more than dirt. Remember that when you stand at prayer, you stand before God Himself, who knows everyone's mind. Therefore, your prayer should be, so to speak, all spirit, all mind.

The saints of God live even after their death. When I stand in church, I often hear how the Mother of God sings the wonderful, heartrending song that She uttered in the house of Her cousin Elizabeth after the Annunciation. At other times, I hear the song of Moses; the song of Zacharias, the father of the Forerunner; the song of Anna, the mother of the prophet Samuel; the song of the three children; the song of Miriam. And how many holy singers of the New Testament delight the ear of the whole Church of God to this very day! And the divine services? The sacraments? The rites? Whose spirit is there, moving and touching our hearts? The Spirit of God and of His saints. Here is a proof of the immortality of the human soul. How is it that all these men have died, and yet they still direct our lives after their death. They are dead, and they still speak, instruct, and touch us!

* * *

As the breath is necessary for the body, and as life without breath is impossible, so the soul cannot truly live without the breath of God's Spirit. As air is necessary for the body, so the Holy Spirit is necessary for the soul. Air is even a kind of image of the Holy Spirit. "*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit*" (John 3:8).

When you are faced with the temptation to sin, then remember that sin angers God greatly, since He hates iniquity. "*Thou hatest all them that work iniquity*" (Psalm 5:6). In order to understand this better, imagine a father, righteous and severe, who loves his family, and tries every way he can to

make his children well-principled and upright, in order to reward them afterwards for their good behavior with the great riches he himself prepared for them with great labor. Nevertheless, this father sees, to his grief, that his children disregard his love, and neither love him, nor pay attention to the inheritance he prepared for them with love, instead choosing to live prodigal lives, rushing impetuously to destruction. Remember that "*sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death*" (James 1:15), because it kills the soul, making us slaves to the devil, the destroyer of men. The more we sin, the more difficult is our conversion, and the surer is our perdition. Fear every sin, therefore, with your whole heart!

When your heart inclines to evil and the waves of the evil one's influence begin to inundate your heart, intending to sweep it off the rock of faith, say to yourself inwardly, "I know my spiritual poverty, my nothingness without faith. I am so weak that it is only by Christ's name that I live and console myself, that I rejoice and my heart grows in love, but without Him I am spiritually dead, I am troubled, and my heart becomes constrained. Without the Lord's cross, I would have long ago become the victim of the most cruel sorrow and despair. Only Christ keeps me alive; the cross alone is my comfort and consolation."

* * *

We are all able to think because thought exists without limit, just as we are able to breathe because air exists without limit. This is the reason why a good idea on any subject is called "inspiration."[1] Our thought constantly flows only thanks to the existence of the eternal, reasoning Spirit. This is why the Apostle says, "*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God*" (2 Cor 3:5). This is also why the Saviour Himself says, "*Do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given you in that hour what you should speak*" (Matt 10:19). Do you see? Our thought and even our word (our inspiration) come to us from without. Of course this happens only in a state of grace or in extreme cases. But even in our ordinary state, all our inspired thoughts come from our guardian angel and the Spirit of God; while, on the contrary, impure, dark thoughts come from our corrupt nature and the devil, ever lying in wait for us. How then, should the Christian behave? "*For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His*

good pleasure" (Phil 2:13). In general, the entire created world bears the impression of God's creative thought in the structure of the visible world, in particular in the earth—in the rotation and the life of the planet; in the distribution of the elements of light, air, water, earth, fire (concealed); in the diffusion of all the other elements in the animal world; in birds, fishes, reptiles, beasts, and men. We see His thought in the wise and efficient design of the animal world, in the remarkable abilities, characteristics, and habits of the animals. Even in the plant world, we see His delicate arrangement in their structure, nourishment, etc. In short, we see the guidance of God's thought everywhere, even in lifeless stone and sand.

Priest of the Lord! Learn how to turn the sorrow of the Christian sufferer into joy through the consolation of faith. Convince him that he is not the most miserable of men, but the most fortunate; assure him that since he was chastised "*in a few things, Great kindness will be shown them*" (Wis 3:5). If you do this, you will be a friend to mankind, an angel of consolation, an instrument of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter.

If the fervor of faith in our heart is not kept alight, then our apathy may entirely extinguish our faith. Christianity, with all its sacraments, will completely die for us. The enemy does everything he can to extinguish faith and obliterate the truth of Christianity in our hearts. That is why we see men who are Christians only in name, their actions declaring them to be pagans.

* * *

Do not think that our faith cannot give us pastors life or that we serve God hypocritically. No! We receive God's mercy more than everyone else, and we know by experience Who the Lord is to us, with His sacraments, His most-pure Mother, and His saints. For instance, in partaking of the Life-giving Mystery of the Body and Blood of the Saviour, we often experience in ourselves their enlivening effect, the heavenly gifts of consolation and joy in the Holy Spirit. We know that even the merciful gaze of a king does not bring as much joy to the heart of the least of his subjects as does the merciful gaze of our heavenly Master, as do His mysteries. We would be extremely ungrateful and hard-hearted if we do not tell all God's beloved about this glory of the Life-giving Mysteries, if we do not extol His miracles, performed in our hearts during every Divine Liturgy. We also often experience the invincible, incomprehensible, divine power of the

precious and life-giving Cross of the Lord, and by its power we drive away from our hearts evil passions, despondency, faint-heartedness, fear, and all the snares of the devil. The Lord is our friend and benefactor. We believe this sincerely, fully acknowledging the truth and power of these words.

* * *

You wish to comprehend the incomprehensible, but can you understand how your soul-killing sorrows overwhelm you, or can you find the means to drive them away, except through the Lord? First of all, learn with your heart how to free yourself from sorrows, how to calm your heart, and then, if necessary, philosophize about the incomprehensible. "*If you then are not able to do the least, why are you anxious for the rest*?" (Luke 12:26).

Think about this more often: whose wisdom is manifest in the construction of your body? Who constantly sustains its life and work? Who has designed the laws of human reason, so that until now these laws govern all men? Who has engraved in the hearts of all men the law of conscience, so that even now it rewards good and punishes evil? O almighty, All-wise, and All-gracious God! Your hand is constantly upon me, a sinner, and there is no moment when Your mercy leaves me. Grant me, then, always to kiss Your gracious hand with living faith. Why should I go far to seek the traces of Your mercy, Your wisdom, Your omnipotence? How clearly these traces are visible within me! I myself am a miracle of God's goodness, wisdom, and omnipotence. I am a microcosm of the whole world; my soul is the representative of the invisible world, while my body represents the visible world.

* * *

Brothers! What is the purpose of our earthly life? It is this: after the trial of earthly sorrows and misfortunes, after our gradual advancement in virtue through the divine gifts of grace given to us in the sacraments, we may rest after our death in the Lord, Who is the peace of our souls. That is why we pray for the dead in the following words: "Give rest, O Lord, to the soul of Thy departed servant." We wish him to rest in peace, to achieve this summit of all desires; therefore, we pray to God with these words. Is it not, then, unwise to grieve too much for the departed? "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matt 11:28), says the

Lord. Our departed ones, who have fallen asleep in a Christian death, hear these words of God and come to him and obtain rest. Why then do we grieve?

Those who are trying to lead a spiritual life have to wage a most subtle and difficult warfare in their thoughts every moment of their life. This is spiritual warfare. They must be entirely awake, every moment, ready to notice every evil thought entering their souls from the evil one and to repel them. Such people must have hearts always burning with faith, humility, and love; otherwise, the cunning devil will quickly invade them, leading to lessening of faith or complete loss of faith. Then every possible evil will inhabit their hearts, evil that will not easily wash away even with tears. Do not, therefore, allow your heart to become cold, especially during prayer, and avoid stony insensibility in every way possible. Very often a person prays only with the lips, but his heart is wounded by weak faith or complete lack of faith. With his words, this man seems near to God, but in his heart he is far from Him. During our prayers, the evil one uses every weapon he has to make our hearts cold and incline them to evil in ways we do not even notice. Pray and strengthen yourself; guard your heart.

* * *

If you wish to ask God to grant you any good thing in prayer, then before praying prepare yourself with undoubting and firm faith, and guard yourself in advance against any doubt or unbelief. It will go ill with you if, during the prayer itself, your heart wavers in its faith and does not stand firm in it. In that case, do not expect God to honor your petition, offered with a doubting heart, for you have offended the Lord, and God does not give His gifts to a nonbeliever. "*And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive*" (Matt 21:22), said the Lord. Therefore, if you ask with doubt or unbelief, you shall not receive. "*If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move*" (Matt 17:20). Therefore, if you doubt and do not believe, you will not be able to do this. "*But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind*," says the Apostle James, "*for let not that man suppose that he will receive anything of the Lord. He is a double-minded man, is unstable in all his ways*" (James 1:6–8). The heart that doubts that God can grant its petitions will be

punished for its lack of faith: it will be painfully tormented and constricted by doubt. Do not anger Almighty God even by a shade of doubt, especially if you have already experienced God's omnipotence many, many times. Doubt is blasphemy against God, an insolent lie of the heart, a falsehood of the lying demon, concealed in the heart, against the Spirit of truth. Fear it as you would fear a venomous serpent—or no, what am I saying? Ignore it; do not pay the slightest attention to it. Remember that God, during your petition, is waiting for your affirmative answer to the question He inwardly asks you: "*Do you believe that I am able to do this?*" To which question you must from the depth of your heart reply, "*Yes, Lord*" (Matt 9:28). Then it will be according to your faith. Let the following considerations also help you in your doubt or unbelief: (1) The good things that I ask of God must be real, not imaginary or fanciful, since everything that exists receives its being from God, for "*without Him nothing was made that was made*" (John 1:3). This means that nothing happens without Him, and everything has either received its being from Him, or comes about by His will or His permission, by means of powers and faculties given by Him to His creatures. God is the all-powerful Master over everything that exists or occurs. Moreover, "*God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did*" (Rom 4:17). Therefore, had I even asked for that which does not exist, He could give it to me by creating it. (2) I ask of God what is possible, because what is impossible for us is possible for God. This means that there cannot be any difficulty even in this respect, for God can do for me even that which I consider to be impossible. It is our misfortune that our faith is hindered by the nearsightedness of our reason—a spider that catches the truth in a web of assessments, logical arguments, and imprecise analogies. Faith embraces and understands in a moment, while reason arrives at the truth by tortuous ways. Faith is the communication of one spirit with another, while reason is the communication of carnal mind-sets. The first is spirit; the second is flesh.

All the blessings of the soul, that is, all that constitutes true life, peace, and the joy in the soul, come from God! This is my experience. This is what my heart tells me. You, O Holy Spirit, are a treasury of blessings!

* * *

If you have Christ in your heart, be aware that you may lose Him, and with Him the peace of your heart. It is difficult to begin anew; efforts to attach yourself to Him again after falling away will be very painful and will cost bitter tears to many. Cling to Christ with all your strength, acquire Him, and do not lose boldness before Him.

* * *

You look at the icon of the Saviour and see that He looks at you with His bright eyes. His gaze is an image of how He actually looks at you with His eyes, brighter than the sun, and sees all your thoughts, hears all the desires and sighs of your heart. The image is exactly that—an image, and represents in signs and symbols that which is indescribable and incomprehensible, understandable by faith alone. Believe, then, that the Saviour always protects you and sees all of you—all your thoughts, sorrows and sighing in all your circumstances, as though you were in the palm of His hand. "*See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me*" (Isa 49:16), says the Lord God. How much consolation and life are contained in these grace-filled words of the Almighty and Provident God! Therefore, pray before the icon of the Saviour as though you stand before Him. The Lover of mankind is present in His icon through His grace, and through His painted eyes, He truly looks at you: "*The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good*" (Prov 15:3), while with His painted ears He hears you. Remember that His eyes are the eyes of God, and His ears are the ears of the omnipresent God.

Esteem the light of Christ in well-intentioned literary works, for He is "*the true light which gives light to every man coming into the world*" (John 1:9). Read them with love, thanking the light-giving Christ Who so richly bestows His light on those who are zealous for the glory of His name.

Wherever I am, as soon as I raise the eyes of my heart in my affliction to God, the Lover of mankind immediately answers my faith and prayer, and my sorrow immediately departs. He is near me at all times and at every hour, Even though I do not see Him, I feel Him intensely in my heart. Sorrow is the death of the heart, and it is a falling away from God. Expansion and stillness in the heart, accompanied by living faith in Him, prove clearly that God is constantly present near me, that He dwells within

me. What intercessor or angel can set us free from our sins or sorrows? No one, save God alone. This is my experience.

* * *

Let us measure the worth of our prayer by a human measure, by comparing it to our interactions with other people. How do we interact with other people? Sometimes we express our requests, praises, and gratitude coldly, apathetically, out of a sense of dry duty, or simply out of politeness. Sometimes our actions are equally cold. However, at other times we do all this with warmth, enthusiastically, with love (sometimes feigned, sometimes sincere). We are similarly duplicitous in our interaction with God. But this must not be. We must always sing our praises, gratitude, and requests to God with the whole heart; every work must be done before Him with the whole heart. We must love Him and trust Him with the whole heart.

* * *

Faith in God's existence is closely connected with faith in the existence of our own soul, as part of the spiritual world. God's existence is as evident to the pious mind as its own existence, because every thought—good or bad—every desire, intention, word, or action of such a mind is followed by a corresponding change in the state of the heart: peace or confusion, joy or sorrow. This is the result of the action on the heart of the God of spirits and all flesh, Who is reflected in the pious mind as the sun is reflected in a drop of water. The purer the drop, the better, the clearer the reflection. The murkier the drop, the dimmer the reflection, so that in an extremely impure or darkened soul, the reflection entirely ceases, and the soul is left in a state of spiritual darkness and insensibility. In this state, a person, having eyes, sees nothing, and, having ears, hears nothing. Again, in relation to our souls, God can be compared to the outer air in relation to the mercury in a barometer, the only difference being that the expansion and contraction, rise and fall of the mercury result from the change in the pressure of the atmosphere, while God remains unchangeable, everlasting, and eternally good and just. On the other hand, the soul, changeable in its relation to God, suffers changes in itself. It inevitably expands in love and acquires consolation when it draws nearer to God through faith and good works, but

inevitably contracts and becomes restless and exhausted when it withdraws itself from God through unlawful acts, weak faith, or even unbelief in God's Truth.

* * *

The evil spirit tries to scatter prayer as if it were a sand heap, he tries to turn the words into dry sand, without coherence or moisture, that is, without fervor of heart. Thus, prayer can become either a house built on sand or a house built on a rock. Those who pray without faith, absently, coldly are those who build on sand; such prayer scatters by itself and brings no profit to him who prays. Those who have their eyes fixed on God during the whole time of their prayer and pray to Him as to a living person, conversing face to face with them, are those who build on rock.

* * *

A grace-filled word, the writings of the Holy Fathers, prayers, and especially the words of the Word Himself, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity—these are truly living water. Water flows, and words flow like water; water refreshes and enlivens the body, and grace-filled words animate the soul, filling it with peace and joy or with compunction and contrition for one's sins.

* * *

Whatever hope we have that God will answer our petition during prayer must be founded on faith in His mercy and generosity, for He is the God of mercy and goodness and the Lover of mankind. It helps to remember all the countless former experiences of mercy and grace given to mankind (in Holy Scriptures and in the lives of the saints) and to us. Therefore, to make our prayer successful, the one praying should already be sure that his petition will be granted and firmly believe this with his whole heart. We often receive that which we have asked for in prayer, especially when we pray for things which will aid in our salvation. It is necessary to ascribe this directly to God and His grace, and not to chance. How can there possibly be any chance in the Kingdom of the Almighty God? Nothing can really happen without His will, since "*All things were made through Him, and without*

Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3). Many do not pray because it seems to them that they did not receive any gift from God when they prayed before, or because they consider praying unnecessary. They say that God knows everything without our asking, and forget that God Himself said: "*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you*" (Matt 7:7). Our requests (prayers) are necessary particularly to strengthen our faith, through which alone can we be saved. "*For by grace you have been saved through faith*" (Eph 2:8). "*O woman, great is your faith*" (Matt 15:28). For this reason, the Lord made the woman pray earnestly, in order to awaken her faith and strengthen it. Such people do not see that they have no faith, which is the Christian's most precious inheritance, which is as necessary as life itself. They do not see that they "*make Him a liar*" (1 John 1:10) by their unbelief, and that they are the children of the devil, unworthy of any of God's mercies. They cannot see that they are already lost. Our hearts must burn during prayer with a desire for spiritual goods, with love for God, Who is clearly visible to our hearts through His extreme goodness to mankind and His readiness to hear all our prayers with fatherly love. "*If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?"* (Matt 7:11)

God, the eternal Truth, does not endure even a moment of our doubt in the truth. God, the eternal Mercy, "*desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*" (1 Tim 2:4). And we, the children of the merciful God, also must wish with our whole heart that all men, even our enemies, will be saved, and we must work toward this end.

Be watchful over your heart during your entire life, examine it, listen to it, and see what prevents its union with the most blessed God. Let this be for you the science of sciences, and with God's help you will easily see what estranges you from God and what draws you to Him, what unites you with Him. Your heart itself will tell you when it is united with Him, and when it is estranged from Him. The evil one, more than anything else, stands between our hearts and God; he separates us from God through various passions, desires of the flesh, and worldly pride.

* * *

Why should it seem incredible if God Himself, the Creator of all things visible and invisible, transforms, changes bread and wine into His own most-pure Body and Blood? In these—in the bread and wine—the Son of God does not become again incarnate, for He was once incarnate, and this is sufficient for all time, but He is incarnate in the very same flesh in which He was before incarnate, in the same manner as He multiplied the five loaves and fed several thousand people with these five loaves. There are a great many mysteries in nature that my mind cannot even formulate; yet they exist with their mysteries. In the same way, this sacrament of the Life-giving Body and Blood is a mystery to me. I do not know how the bread and wine are made into the Body and Blood of the Lord Himself, but the Mystery of the Body and Blood truly exists, though it is incomprehensible to me. My Creator—I am only His clay, for God formed me of flesh and blood and breathed a soul into me—is the Most Wise, the infinitely Almighty God, infinitely mysterious. I am also a mystery, since I am the work of His hands. For my soul there is the Spirit of the Lord, and for my soul and body there are His Body and Blood.

* * *

In the same way as the soul bears the body, God bears the whole universe, all the worlds, but is not Himself encompassed by them. The soul fills the whole body, and "*the Spirit of the Lord fills the world*" (Wis 1:7). The difference is that the soul is limited by the body, though not completely, since it can go anywhere, while the Spirit of the Lord is not limited by the universe and is not contained in the world, as the soul is in the body.

Christ, after being admitted into the heart by faith, dwells in it in peace and joy. It is no wonder that God "is Holy, and rests in the saints."[2]

Do not lose yourself in gazing at the beauty of a human face, but look at the soul; do not look at a man's clothing (the body being his temporary garment), but look at the person wearing the clothes. Do not admire the magnificence of the mansion, but look at the person who lives in it and what he is. Otherwise, you will offend the image of God in the man; you will dishonor the King by worshipping His servant and not giving Him the least amount of the honor due to Him. Also, do not look at how beautiful is the typesetting of a book, but consider its spirit; otherwise, you will despise the spirit and exalt the flesh, for the letters are the flesh, and the contents of

the book the spirit. Do not be allured by the melodious sounds of an instrument or a voice, but judge their spirit by their effect on the soul or by their words. If the music inspires calm and chaste, holy feelings, then listen to it and feed your soul with it. But if it inspires passionate emotions, then stop listening to it and throw aside both the flesh and the spirit.

* * *

The inner man, burdened by the noise of the world, burdened by the darkness of his flesh, is not as burdened by the temptations of the evil one early in the morning. Just after waking up, he is like a fish that sometimes playfully jumps out of the water. All the remaining time, he is enveloped in almost impenetrable darkness; his eyes are covered by a bandage that conceals from him the true state of things spiritual and physical. Take advantage of these morning hours, which are the hours of a life renewed by temporary sleep. They give us a glimpse of that state in which we shall be when we shall rise up renewed on that great and universal morning of the day of resurrection, or when we shall rid ourselves of this mortal body.

* * *

Even during prayer, more often than not, man is not the son of freedom, but the slave of necessity and duty. Look at any person you like, even a priest. Do many of them pray with a free and open heart, with living faith and love?

* * *

Sometimes, during prayer, there are moments of deadly darkness and spiritual anguish arising from doubt in the heart (for unbelief is darkness). Do not let your heart fail you at such moments, but remember that if the divine light has gone out inside you, it still shines in all its splendor and greatness in God Himself, in God's Church, in heaven, and in the material world in which "*His invisible attributes are clearly seen*" (Rom 1:20). Do not think that truth has failed, because truth is God Himself, and everything that exists has its foundation and purpose only in Him. Only your weak, sinful, and darkened heart can doubt the truth, for it cannot always bear the strength of the light of truth, and it is not always capable of containing its

purity. Only when it is being purified, or has been purified, from its sins (the first cause of spiritual darkness) can the heart be established in truth. The proof of this you may find in yourself. When the light of faith or God's truth dwells in your heart, only then is it calm, firm, strong, and alive, but when your heart darkens, it becomes uneasy, weak as a reed shaken by the wind, and lifeless. Do not pay any attention to this darkness of Satan. Drive it away from your heart by making the sign of the life-giving Cross!

Do not spare yourself at the time of prayer of the heart, even if you have been working all day. Do not be negligent in holy prayer; pray your entire prayer rule before God to the very end with your whole heart, for it is your duty before God. "*No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God*" (Luke 9:62). If you allow yourself to pray carelessly, not with your heart, you will not fall asleep (if you pray at night) until you have wiped out your sin before God with your tears. This doesn't happen with everybody, however, but only with the perfected. Take care, then, not to consider your flesh before God, and disdain bodily repose for His sake. If you have made a rule to read so many prayers (whether they be long or short, fulfill the reading of all of them well), read the prayers conscientiously, and do not do God's work with a divided heart, so that only one half belongs to Him and the remaining half to your own flesh. Our God is a jealous God, and He will not suffer your duplicity, your self-pity. He will deliver you up to the devil, and the devil will not let your heart rest because of your neglect of God, Who is the true peace of your heart, and Who will always do that which is for your own good, in order to keep your heart near Him, for every insincere prayer removes your heart from God and sets every person in opposition to himself, while every earnest prayer draws your heart nearer to God and makes it God's forever. Thus, believe me, if you hurry through your prayers in order to give rest to your body, you will lose both spiritual and bodily rest. Oh! By what labor, sweat, and tears is the approach of our heart to God gained! Is it possible that we should again make our very prayers (when careless) the means of our estrangement from God, and will not God become jealous as a result? He has compassion on us and on our former labors, and He desires that we should again unfailingly turn to Him with our whole hearts. He wants us to belong to Him for all time.

Without God, without His omnipresence, neither my heart nor my thought can make a single movement. If there is an action, there must be a

reason for that action; if there is a consequence, there must be an inciting event. This is why the Apostle says, "*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God*" (2 Cor 3:5). God lives, and this is why my soul lives.

If my life were prolonged for a few moments—let us say ten—and five of these were moments of calm, but the remaining five were full of pain and suffering, then I would have to say without doubt, "Surely the Giver of Life is with me, and He will provide for me." At the same time, I undoubtedly would also have to say, "There is a being in the world who has the power of death, because the five painful moments must proceed from a being that works against God, for the same cause cannot produce opposite actions. And in me, sinner as I am, at least seventy parts of my spiritual life belong to God, and only thirty parts to the devil. How is it possible for me, then, not to see my Benefactor constantly before me, and how can I possibly waver mentally in my living faith in Him?"

* * *

Time passes without stopping, and my body, even during my lifetime, constantly changes and passes on, and the whole world, as seen in its motion, also passes on, as though it were rushing to its appointed end, like a wound-up machine. Where, then, is the constant? The constant is that which moves all things and directs them to their purpose. The constant First Cause of all that is complex and created, being Himself neither complex nor mutable, is eternal. The souls of angels and men, created in the image of the First Cause, are also constant. Everything else is like a soap bubble. I am not demeaning created matter by these words, but only speak of it in comparison with the Creator and the blessed spirits.

* * *

Value the benefits of the greatest miracle of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, manifested in the Communion, with faith, of His divine Mysteries. What is the miracle? The peace-giving and life-giving effect on your heart, slain by sin, which is so apparent after the removal of the uneasiness of heart and spiritual deadness that often precedes communion. Never consider it from habit as anything ordinary or unimportant: by such thoughts and such a disposition of heart you will incur the wrath of God,

and after communion you will enjoy neither peace nor life. Through heartfelt gratitude for the holy life-giving Mysteries, you will obtain life from the Lord and your faith will increase more and more. Fear and uneasiness come from unbelief. If they appear during communion, take it as a sign that through unbelief you are removing yourself from the Life contained in the Cup. Do not pay any attention to them. O faith. Faith! You yourself are a miracle! It is you that saves us! "*Your faith has made your well*" (Mark 5:34). And after living faith in God's truth we always go from God in peace; but, on the contrary, if we do not believe, we have no peace. Ah! Satan often enters into us after we have unworthily communed of the divine Mysteries, and in every way he tries to instill the falsehood of unbelief into our hearts, for unbelief is the same thing as a lie. "*He was a murderer from the beginning*" (John 8:44), and even now he tries in every way to destroy men through his falsehood, through various thoughts and desires. By stealing into the heart in the form of unbelief or passions, he manifests himself in a manner worthy of him, mostly through impatience and malice. You can see that he is in you, but often you cannot rid yourself of him, because he usually takes care to close all the exits from your heart through unbelief, hard-heartedness, and other passions of his inspiration. "Your labor is in vain, fallen angel, I am the servant of my Lord Jesus Christ. You, who exalt yourself in your arrogance, lower yourself by thus violently struggling with me, weak as I am." Speak thus inwardly to the evil spirit, who lies like a heavy load on your heart and compels you to all kinds of evil. These words are like fiery whips to the proud spirit, and he, shamed by your firmness and spiritual wisdom, will flee from you. You at once will perceive, feel, and wonder at the marvelous change within you. The heavy, soul-destroying load in your heart will no longer be there; you will feel so, so relieved! You will be convinced through experience that there are spirits of evil constantly seeking our destruction, poisoning our hearts with the venom of dark and evil thoughts, and endeavoring to destroy our love for our fellow man and our fellowship with them.

Since all my misfortunes arise in my invisible mind and heart, I need an invisible Saviour, Who directs all hearts. O my strength, Jesus, Son of God! O Light of my mind, the peace, the joy of my heart, glory to You! Glory to You, Deliverer from invisible enemies that fight against my mind and heart, endeavoring to destroy in me the very source of my life!

* * *

Keep a strict watch for every manifestation of pride. It appears imperceptibly, particularly in time of vexation and irritability against others for completely unimportant reasons.

* * *

The miraculous effect of the life-giving cross on our souls, eaten away by the poison of evil, proves to us undoubtedly and evidently: (1) we truly have a soul, a spiritual essence; (2) there are evil spirits, harming our souls; (3) God and our Lord Jesus Christ exist, and He is always with us in His Divinity; and (4) He has indeed accomplished our salvation by His suffering and death on the cross, and He has destroyed the power of the devil by the cross. How many proofs of the advantage of our faith there are in the miraculous effect of the life-giving Cross alone! Glory to the Christian faith!

* * *

Those who lead a spiritual life see through the eyes of their heart how the devil lays his snares, how the angels guide us, and how the Lord in His Providence allows temptations and comforts us.

* * *

The only way to spend the day in perfect holiness, peace, and sinlessness is to pray in the most sincere and fervent way possible, as soon as you rise from sleep in the morning. It will bring Christ into your heart, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and they will give strength and firmness to your soul against attacks from evil. All that is required of you is to guard your heart.

* * *

Sometimes in the pain of your soul you want to die. It is easy to die and does not take long, but are you prepared for death? Remember that after death, the judgment of your whole life will follow (Heb 9:27). You are not

prepared for death, and if it were to come to you, your whole body would shudder. Therefore, do not waste words in vain. Do not say: “It is better for me to die,” but say rather, “How can I prepare for death in a Christian manner?” Through faith, good works, and by bravely bearing the miseries and sorrows that happen to you, in order to be able to meet death fearlessly, peacefully, and without shame, not as a terrible law of nature, but as the fatherly call of the eternal, heavenly, holy, and blessed Father into the eternal Kingdom. Remember the elder who, being weary of his heavy burden, called for death. When it came, he did not wish to die, but preferred to go on carrying his heavy burden.

With the inner eyes of my heart, I see how I inwardly breathe Christ into my heart, how He enters into it, and suddenly calms and sweetens it. O, may I not remain alone, without You, Giver of life, my breath, my joy! It is hard for me without You.

* * *.

Is it possible to pray in a hurry without harming your prayer? It is possible to those who have learned the inner prayer of a pure heart. During prayer, it is necessary for your heart to sincerely desire that which you ask. You should feel the truth of your words, and this comes naturally to a pure heart. That is why it is capable of praying even in a hurry, and at the same time in a God-pleasing manner, since the speed of the prayer in this case does not affect the truth (sincerity) of the prayer. But for those who have yet to acquire prayer of the heart, it is necessary to pray slowly, waiting for the heart to respond to each word of the prayer. This is not always quickly given to men unaccustomed to prayerful contemplation. Therefore, for such men, it must be laid down as an absolute rule to pronounce the words of the prayer slowly, and with pauses. Wait until every word finds its own proper resonance in your heart.

* * *

The heart of a person either draws near to God or is estranged from God; therefore, he experiences either peace and joy, or fear and agitation and oppression, either life, or spiritual death. We draw most near to God in time of affliction, from which no one can save us but God, to Whom we then turn with our whole heart, and thus approach Him sincerely. We are

estranged from God in times of ease and abundance of earthly blessings, which make the old carnal man puffed up. Especially when he thirsts for riches, glory, and distinction, and has attained all these, he loses faith from his heart and forgets God, the Just Judge. He forgets the immortality of his soul and his duty to love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself.

* * *

In the same way as an evil man, who has a request to make of a good, meek, and humble man, tries to be more like him for the success of his petition, a Christian who approaches God, His Mother, the angels, or the saints in prayer should try to resemble the Ones he petitions as much as possible in order to ensure the success of his prayer. In this lies the secret of drawing near to God and of His quickly answering our prayers.

* * *

The Thrice-shining God sees and hears me; this is the most life-giving certitude for my heart, infusing it with peace and joy. The compassionate Mother of God also sees me and hears my prayers and sighs, and this is another comforting assurance, constantly confirmed by experience. Therefore, I will walk in the knowledge of God’s omnipresence and omniscience.

* * *

The most striking proof that there is a devil in the world is that people do not feel, or feel very little (though some try), the mercies that God has bestowed upon them in His creation, Providence, and redemption. Therefore, there must be a powerful antagonist to everything good and righteous.

* * *

The goal of our life is to unite with God, but sin completely hinders this. Therefore, flee from sin as from a terrible enemy, as from the destroyer of the soul, because to be without God is death, not life. Let us therefore

understand our purpose; let us always remember that the Master of all calls us to union with Himself.

* * *

It is especially necessary for us Christians to have a pure heart, because with the eyes of the heart we must see God as He is, with His love for us and with all His perfections. We are called to contemplate the beauty of the angels, the glory of the Holy Virgin, the beauty of Her soul, Her greatness as the Mother of God, the beauty of the souls of God's saints, and their love for us. We must see them as they are in themselves; we must contemplate the truths of the Christian faith, with all its sacraments, and feel their greatness; we must see the state of our own souls, especially our sins. An impure heart, that is, a heart occupied with passionate, earthly attachments, a heart that sustains itself on carnal desires, the lust of the eyes, and worldly pride, can see none of these things.

* * *

Prayer is the lifting up of the mind and heart to God.[3] From this it is evident that it is quite impossible for anyone to pray if his mind and heart are attached to anything carnal, such as money or honors, or if his heart is filled with passions, such as hatred or envy for others, because passions usually bind the heart, while God fills the heart and gives it true freedom.

It is impossible to understand how Jesus Christ Himself is united with the sign of the cross and gives it miraculous power to drive away passions and demons and to calm a troubled soul. It is likewise impossible to understand how the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ is united with the bread and wine, changing them into His own Flesh and Blood, how He obviously purifies our souls from sins, bringing to them heavenly peace and tranquility and making them good, gentle, humble, and full of heartfelt faith and trust. This is partly explained by the fact that the Almighty, creative Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ is everywhere, and since He "*calls those things which do not exist as though they did*" (Rom 4:17), how much more can He create one substance out of another! And in order for the unbelieving heart not to think that both the sign of the cross and the name of Christ act miraculously by themselves, apart from and independently of Christ Himself, this same cross and name of Christ do not perform any miracles, until I see Christ the

Lord with the eyes of my heart or with my faith, until I believe with my whole heart in all that He has accomplished for our salvation.

"*I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matt 28:20). So it is, Master: You are with us all our days. We are not a single day without You, and we do not live without Your presence near us! You are with us especially in the sacrament of Your Body and Blood. O, how truly and essentially are You present in the Holy Mysteries! You, our Lord, in every liturgy take upon Yourself a vile body similar to ours in every respect except for sin, and You nourish us with Your life-giving flesh. Through the sacrament, You are wholly with us, and Your Flesh is united to our flesh, while Your Spirit is united to our spirit, and we feel this life-giving, peaceful, sweetest union. We feel that by joining ourselves to You in the Holy Eucharist, we become one spirit with You, as it is said, "*But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him*" (1 Cor 6:17). We become good, meek, and humble like You, for You have said of Yourself, "*for I am gentle and lowly in heart*" (Matt 11:29). It is true that often our evil and blind flesh or the prince of this world, who dwells in our sinful flesh, whispers to us that the sacrament contains only bread and wine, not the true Body and Blood of our Lord Himself, and suggests our own sight, taste, and touch as convincing witnesses. But we do not allow ourselves to listen to these lies, instead saying, "To You, Lord, everything is possible. You created the flesh of men, animals, fishes, birds, reptiles, all creatures. Is it possible that You, 'Who art everywhere, and fillest all things,' will not create flesh for Yourself?" Moreover, You already have changed dead matter into living creatures. For example, You changed Moses's rod into a serpent. There is nothing impossible for You. Can You not, therefore, create flesh for Yourself out of bread and wine, which are so close to our flesh, being used for our food and drink, and being converted into our own flesh and blood? You do not test our faith more than we can bear, for You do not transubstantiate a lump of earth into Your Most-pure Body, but white bread, soft, clean, pleasant to the taste, and You do not create Your Blood from water, but from wine, called in Holy Scripture "*the blood of the grape*" (Sir 39:26), similar in color to blood, agreeable to the taste, and pleasing to the heart of man. You know our infirmity, the weakness of our faith, and therefore You condescend to employ in the sacrament of Your Body and Blood the substances most suitable to them. Let us, therefore, firmly believe that in the form of bread and wine we commune of the true Body and Blood

of our Lord, that in the mystery of the Holy Communion, Jesus Christ Himself will dwell with us "*always, even to the end of the age*" (Matt 28:20).

Our soul is, so to speak, a reflection of God's countenance, and the brighter this reflection, the clearer and calmer is our soul; the dimmer this reflection, the darker, the more agitated is the soul. And since our soul is our very heart, it is necessary that every truth of God should be reflected in it through our emotions, through gratitude, and that it should reflect no lie. Feel God's love in the most-pure Mysteries; feel the truth of all prayers. Our heart is a mirror: as the objects of the outer world are reflected in an ordinary mirror, so the truth should be reflected exactly in our hearts.

* * *

It is good, very good indeed, to be virtuous; the virtuous man is at peace with himself, pleasing to God, and agreeable to other people. The virtuous man unwillingly attracts everyone's attention. Why is this so? Because fragrance unwillingly attracts attention and makes everyone wish to smell it. Look at the very appearance of the virtuous man; look at his face. What sort of a face is it? It is the face of an angel. Meekness and humility are diffused through all its features, involuntarily captivating everyone by their beauty. Pay attention to his manner of speaking; from it comes an even sweeter fragrance. It is as if you are face to face with his soul, enraptured with his sweet conversation.

* * *

Love calms and pleasantly expands the heart and enlivens it, while hatred painfully constricts and disturbs it. Those who hate others torture and tyrannize over themselves; therefore, they are the most foolish of fools.

* * *

When you see your body wasted by sickness, do not murmur against God, but say instead, "*The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord*" (Job 1:21). You are accustomed to look at your body as your own inalienable property, but that is quite wrong, because your body is the temple of God.

What an exalted person is a priest! He is in constant conversation with God, and God constantly replies to him. Whatever rite he is performing, whatever prayers he is uttering, he is speaking to God, and whatever the rite, whatever the prayer, the Lord always answers him. How, under these circumstances, when assaulted by passions, can the priest forget that such passions are base, impure, especially for him, and that it is impossible to let them enter his heart, which Jesus Christ alone should fill entirely? A priest is an angel, not a man; everything worldly should be left far behind him. O Lord, "*Thy priests shall be clothed with righteousness*" (Psalm 131:9), let them always remember the greatness of their calling and let them not be entangled in the nets of the world and the devil; let them be saved from "*the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in*" (Mark 4:19).

Innumerable and various are the ways by which the devil enters our soul and estranges it from God, oppressing it with all his dark, hateful, and murderous essence. Every movement of a passion in the soul is an entryway, and he does not miss the smallest opportunity of entering the soul. Likewise, innumerable and various are the ways for the Holy Spirit to enter the soul: the way of sincere faith, of true humility, of love for God and our neighbor, and so on. But, to our misfortune, the destroyer of men from time immemorial makes every effort to obstruct all these ways for the Holy Spirit to enter the soul. The most usual path to God for us sinners who have strayed from Him into a far-away land is the way of painful suffering and bitter tears. Both Holy Scriptures and personal experience testify that, in order to draw near to God, it is necessary for the sinner to suffer, weep, shed tears, and convert his deceitful heart: "*Draw near to God … Lament and mourn and weep!*" (James 4:8,9). Tears have power to cleanse the wickedness of our heart, and suffering and affliction are necessary, because through suffering the sinful expansion of the heart is contracted for our salvation, and when the heart is thus humbled, tears flow more easily.

When the devil is in our heart, we feel an unusual poisonous heaviness and heat in the breast and heart. The soul becomes extremely constricted and darkened, everything irritates it, it feels an aversion to every good work, it perverts the words and acts of other people in reference to itself, seeing evil intentions everywhere, and therefore it feels a deep, deadly hatred for everyone. It is infuriated and longs for vengeance. "*Therefore by*

their fruits you will know them" (Matt 7:20). There are days when the spirit of evil disturbs me.

People stop believing either because they have completely lost the spirit of prayer, or because they never had it at all. In short, because they do not pray. The prince of this world has free rein to act in the hearts of such people; he becomes their master. They have not asked and do not ask for God's grace in prayer (for God's gifts are only given to those who ask and seek); therefore, their hearts, corrupt by nature, become desiccated without the enlivening dew of the Holy Spirit. Finally, from their extreme aridity they catch fire with the infernal flame of unbelief and various passions. The devil knows how to inflame the passions that keep up this terrible fire, and he triumphs at the sight of the ruin of the unfortunate souls that were redeemed by the blood of Him who trampled the power of Satan underfoot.

* * *

A morning prayer. O, God! Creator and Master of the World! Mercifully protect Your creature, adorned with Your Godly image, in these morning hours. Let Your eyes, a thousand times brighter than the rays of the sun, enliven and enlighten my soul, darkened and slain by sin. Deliver me from despondency and slothfulness, grant me joy and vigor of soul, so that with a glad heart I may praise Your mercy, Your holiness, Your boundless greatness, and Your infinite perfections, at every hour and in every place. For Your, Lord, are my Creator and the Master of my life, and to You Your reasonable creatures every hour ascribe glory and praise, both now and forever and to ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

From the time when man willingly fell away from God, he, like an animal that was once domestic, but afterward grew wild in a thick forest, reluctantly looks back at his former home, preferring the darkness of the forest—that is, of this world—to the light of his former home, God's paradise. It is difficult for him to unite himself to God, and when so united, he often falls away again from Him. It is difficult for him to sincerely believe in God and His revelation, and he does not constantly strive to preserve the heavenly gift of faith in his heart.

* * *

If God does not leave a blade of grass, a flower, or the small leaf of a tree bereft of His Providence, will He leave us? O, let every man be convinced with his whole heart that God is true to Himself in His Providence for even the least of His creatures. Let him understand that the Creator invisibly dwells in all His creatures. In the words of our Saviour, God clothes the grass of the field, feeds the birds of the air (Matt 6:26–30). In how many ways does God give us, His creatures, joy, even through flowers? Like a tender mother, in His eternal power and wisdom, every summer He creates for us, out of nothing, these most beautiful plants. Let us enjoy them, not forgetting to glorify the goodness of the Creator, our Heavenly Father. Let us in our turn also reply to His love by acquiring loving hearts.

Whoever does not believe in God, Who delivers from difficult circumstances, but is faint-hearted, does not wish to render glory to God. Such a person imagines God to be not vigilant, but sleeping, neither all-powerful nor merciful. Such a person lies about the God of truth and sins grievously. Especially inexcusable is faint-heartedness and unbelief in a person who has already been deemed worthy of receiving frequent miraculous help from God the Saviour. O, how great a sinner I am!

* * *

The invisible, all-fulfilling God often tangibly moves my invisible soul, which enjoys miraculous calm and heavenly joy from His touch. It is not my eyes that bring me tidings of my God (my senses are for the lower objects of creation), neither does my hearing, by means of words or the sound of the voice, bring me word of the Unattainable One, but the soul itself becomes, so to speak, infused with God.

* * *

When your heart is disturbed and depressed by the wickedness of men, remember how boundlessly you are beloved by the Almighty and All-righteous God Who suffers evil until the time comes, and then will justly punish it. You cannot manage yourself, your tongue, or a single member of your body. Judge by this the greatness of the One Who governs the whole world, Who keeps it in such wonderful order, Who directs the whole of

mankind, evil, perverted as we are, ever ready as we are to destroy each other, and still more prosperous than destitute under His sovereignty. How almighty and wise must He be to govern such a myriad! Trust in Him entirely.

* * *

When considering God's Mysteries, do not inwardly ask how can this be. You do not know how God created the whole world from nothing, neither can you (or should you!) know how God mysteriously works. God's mystery must remain a mystery for you, because you are not God and cannot know all that is known to the eternally Wise, Almighty God. You are the work of His hands, His most insignificant creature. Remember that there was a time when there was nothing, and then everything that exists was created out of nothing by the Word of God. "*Without Him nothing was made that was made*" (John 1:3).

You who stand at prayer, give God your heart, your loving, true heart, with which you love your children, your father and mother, your benefactors and friends, and in which you feel the sweetness of pure, unfeigned love.

* * *

Sometimes during lengthy prayer only a few minutes are truly pleasing to God and constitute true prayer, true service to God. The chief thing in prayer is the nearness of the heart to God, as proved by the sweetness of God's presence in the soul.

* * *

"Let it be as I will, and not as you will." This is the mighty voice of God that our soul hears when it has fallen into sin and desires to emerge from a state of spiritual, sinful affliction. Let it be as I will: either repent from the depths of your heart in proportion to the sin and return to the road that leads to life, shown by Me; either bear the punishment corresponding to the sin, determined by My justice, or your sin will torment you as a deviation from My laws. Our soul will only enjoy peace when we truly repent from the depths of our heart or bear God's just punishment. O, Almighty and most

just power of our God, invisibly directing our invisible souls, glory to You! Glory to You, God our Saviour! Thy will be done in us!

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How easily and quickly can the Lord save us! Instantaneously, unexpectedly, imperceptibly. Often during the day I was a great sinner, but at night, after prayer, I went to rest, justified and made whiter than snow by the grace of the Holy Spirit, with the deepest peace and joy in my heart! How easy it is also for the Lord to save us in the evening of our life, at the end of our days! O! Save, save, save me, most gracious Lord; receive me into Your Heavenly Kingdom! Everything is possible to You. "*To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand*" (Rom 14:4).

The Creator has placed and concealed that which is most important, and constitutes the life of a creature, far in the depths of that creature's essence; we see this in all things. The same is true of man—the soul is in the midst of his being, in the heart, which is why the soul is often called the heart, and the heart is called the soul. "*And my spirit is despondent within me, and my heart within me is vexed*" (Psalm 142:4). "*Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me*" (Psalm 50:12).

Our God is "*compassionate and merciful, long-suffering, and of great kindness*" (Psalm 102:8). He is not a God of torment and punishment. Our torments are the fruit of our sins and the work of the bodiless fallen spirits. Therefore, if you suffer grievously, only blame your sins and the devil, but chiefly yourself, because the devil would not do you any harm if he did not find anything in you that he could fasten on to.

"*For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God*" (Exod 20:5). "*My glory will I not give to another*" (Isa 42:8). These words of the Lord of Glory come to pass every time I ascribe the glory of my God's works, accomplished in me by the Holy Gifts, to anything or anybody else, and do not ascribe them with my whole heart to Him. He instantly becomes jealous of the glory of His righteous, ever-miraculous, life-giving Mysteries, and in His justice He punishes my soul with His Fatherly rod! Then my soul clearly hears the voice of its God*: And My glory I will not give to another*. As you do not ascribe to Me the glory due to Me, so evident to you in My Mysteries, I strike you inwardly with the rod of My truth so that you may

know and believe that I will never give My glory to another. I cleanse your sins and make your soul whiter than snow by My blood; I visit your soul with peace and joy; I warm and cherish you as a mother cherishes her child; I instill within you My meekness and humility; I pour love into your heart; I completely transform and change you (to your own amazement) into a new man. To whom else shall I give the glory of My works? I am eternally unchangeable. "*God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent*" (Num 23:19).

The invisible God acts on my soul as if He were visible, as if He were present here before me, knowing all my thoughts and feelings. Every inward slothfulness, stubbornness, or other passion is always accompanied by a corresponding punishment. In general, if my inner disposition is unworthy of God and His holiness, then I suffer punishment for it in my heart: a devouring fire. If it is worthy, then I am joyful and at peace.

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No, no matter what you say, a man is sometimes too irritable and too angry to be so of his own will, but only through the most zealous endeavors of the devil. Merely stop to look at yourself or another during a time of irritation and anger, when you or anyone else wants to actually destroy your antagonist (either real or imagined). Compare this state with the subsequent change (which sometimes occurs very quickly, thanks to your guardian angel)—tranquility, meekness, and kindness, and you will say to yourself, "No, this is a completely different person from the one who, just a moment ago, was so full of anger and rage. This man is the one '*from whom the demons have departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind*' (Luke 8:35). In him there is not even a shadow of his former anger and madness!" Some deny the existence of evil spirits, but such events in everyday life clearly prove their existence. If every event has its inciting reason, and if the tree is to be judged by its fruits, then who will not see in the madly infuriated man the presence of an evil spirit who can only show himself in a manner worthy of him? Who will not see the prince of anger in the torrent of human anger? Moreover, a man subject to irritability and anger clearly feels the presence of a hostile evil power in his heart. It produces in the soul quite the reverse of what has been said by the Saviour of His own presence: "*My yoke is easy and My burden is light*" (Matt

11:30). The presence of the former spirit results in terrible heaviness and pain in body and soul.

In church, most of what you hear is the voices of the clergy, readers, and singers imploring God's mercy. What does this mean? It means that all of us, no matter how many are in God's Temple, deserve God's punishment for our sins. Before we even come to church, we must remember that we are sinners, who have come to the Lord of Heaven and Earth, to our Creator and Benefactor (Whom we have daily and hourly angered by our iniquities) to beg for mercy, everyone for himself, and also, according to Christian love, for others. These prayers asking for mercy are the great, small, and augmented litanies. Since there is not a single superfluous word in the church services, during the augmented litany we must pray especially fervently to God, from the depths of a most contrite heart. We are reminded to do this at the beginning of the litany by these words: "Let us say with our whole souls and with our whole heart." At this time, we must lay aside even the slightest coldness, the slightest inattentiveness of the heart, and, burning with the spirit of humility, becoming all attention, we must offer the Creator our most fervent prayers for mercy. But what do we see at the time of the exclamations of the priest and the singing by the singers of the great and augmented litany? For the most part, we see the usual inattentiveness and indifference on the part of those praying.

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After unworthy communion of the Mysteries, and also after unworthy and cold prayer, our soul feels ill at ease. This means that God does not enter our heart, distressed at its unbelief and coldness, and He allows the evil spirit to nest in our hearts to make us feel the difference between His own presence and yoke of the evil spirits.

* * *

A terrible truth. After death, impenitent sinners lose every possibility of amendment, and therefore remain inevitably given over to everlasting torments (for sin cannot but torment). How is this proven? It is easily proven by the actual state of some living sinners and by the nature of sin itself, which is to keep the man in thrall and to close every outlet to him. Who does not know how difficult it is, without God's special grace, for a

sinner to turn from his beloved way of sin to the path of virtue? How deeply sin takes root in the heart and entire being of the sinner! It gives the sinner its own perspective of things, quite different from reality, making sin appear in an enticing light! For this reason, we see that sinners often do not even think of their conversion. They do not even consider themselves to be great sinners, because their eyes are blinded by their self-love and pride. And if they do consider themselves sinners, then they give themselves up to the most terrible despair, which overwhelms their mind with darkness and greatly hardens their heart. If not for the grace of God, what sinner would ever return to God? For it is the nature of sin to darken our souls, to bind us hand and foot. The time and place for the action of grace is here alone; after death, only the prayers of the Church remain, and these prayers can be efficacious only for penitent sinners, only for those whose souls are receptive, who have taken the light of good works with them out of this life, to which the grace of God or the grace-filled prayer of the church can become engrafted. Impenitent sinners are undoubtedly sons of perdition. What does my experience tell me when I am the prisoner of sin? I am tormented sometimes an entire day, and I cannot turn to God with my whole heart, because sin hardens my heart, making God's mercy inaccessible to me. I burn in the fire and willingly remain in it, because sin has made me powerless, and I, like one inwardly chained, am unable to turn to God until He, seeing my helplessness, my humility, and my tears, takes pity on me and sends me His grace! It is not without reason that a man given over to sin is spoken of as "*delivered … into chains of darkness*" (2 Pet 2:4).

Evidently, your spiritual life is divided into two sharply different states—a state of peace, joy, expansion of heart, and a state of suffering, fear, and constraint of soul. The causes of the first state are spiritual actions conforming with the Creator's laws; the cause of the second state is transgression of His holy laws. I always can and do notice the beginning of one or the other state; I am constantly aware of both states. Therefore, it always happens that by doing away with the reasons for the state of suffering and spiritual constriction, the consequences (i.e., the suffering and spiritual constriction) are also done away with.

* * *

"*Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed you are disqualified*" (2 Cor 13:5). Truly, Christ dwells in me. Meanwhile, I have until now been useless; I did not think and was not firmly convinced that the Lord is in me. It is He, the All-Holy, Who is so sensitive in me to the slightest impurity of heart; it is He Who incites me to drive away from my soul the very seed of sin in the heart. But, alas! Satan is also there, ready to devour me at every step, and he demands me from God.

When people ask God for mercy with contrition and tears, and you are moved to sorrow by their pain, you should pray for the forgiveness of their sins in the same way as you pray for the forgiveness of your own. You should always pray for the salvation of others as you pray for your own salvation. If you acquire this habit, you will receive from God an abundance of spiritual gifts, the gifts of the Holy Spirit Who loves the soul that cares for the salvation of others, because He wishes to save us all in any possible way, if only we do not oppose Him and do not harden our hearts. "*But the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*" (Rom 8:26).

We often hear from others, or sometimes read in the works of others, what God has placed in our mind and heart, what we ourselves have thought—that is, we often encounter our own favorite thoughts in others, and it seems to us as though they stole these thoughts from us, as though we were the first to have these thoughts, and therefore they are our personal property. Presumptuous thoughts! What? Is there not only one God, the Lord of all intellects? Is there not one Spirit in all who seek truth? Do we not have only one Enlightener, "*which gives light to every man coming into the world*" (John 1:9)? Glory to the one God, Glory to Him Who loves all and bountifully bestows upon all His spiritual and bodily gifts! Glory to Him who is no respecter of persons and Who reveals the mysteries of His love, omnipotence, and wisdom unto babes! (Luke 22:29, John 3;1).

God's saints are near to believing hearts, and, like the truest and kindest of friends, they are ready at a moment's notice to help the faithful and pious who call upon them with faith and love. Most of the time, when we require earthly help, we wait for that assistance for a long time, but we have neither to send for, nor wait long for, spiritual assistance. Sincere faith can summon saints close to the heart in a moment, and the person praying will as quickly receive full spiritual help, according to the measure of his faith. In saying

this, I speak from experience. I have been frequently delivered from sorrows through the intercession and patronage of the saints, especially through the intercession of our Lady, the Holy Virgin Mary. Probably some will say that this is the result simply of faith or a firm, determined conviction that I will be delivered from sorrow, not the intercession of the saints. No! How can I prove this? It is made obvious by the fact that if I do not call upon the saints known to me (without making any distinctions among them) with heartfelt prayer, if I do not see them with the eyes of my heart, then I obtain no help, whatever firm conviction I may have felt that I would be saved without their help. I recognize, I feel clearly, that I receive help in the name of those saints to whom I have prayed, because of my living faith in them. It works in the same way as such things normally happen in the world. First, I see my helpers by means of heartfelt faith; then, seeing them, I pray to them also with my whole heart, invisibly but in a way I understand. After this, having received invisible help in a way only understandable to my soul, I am completely convinced that this help has been obtained from them. In the same way, a sick man cured by a doctor knows that he has been cured by *that* doctor, not by anyone else. He knows that his illness has passed away not by itself, but through the help of this particular doctor. All this comes to pass so obviously that it is only necessary to have eyes to see.

* * *

I am a man, and the grace, truth, and righteousness of God are continually working in me. God either has mercy on me, comforts me, or He punishes me with sorrows for the inner movements of my soul that were contrary to His law. But the earth is full of men like me. Therefore, in them also God manifests His mercy, truth, and righteousness, as in myself. "*But it is the same God who works all in all*" (Cor 7:6).

Let no one think that sin is something unimportant. No, sin is a terrible evil that destroys the soul now and in the future life. In the future life, the sinner will be bound hand and foot (I refer to the soul) and cast into outer darkness. As the Saviour said, "*Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness*" (Matt 22:13). In other words, he will entirely lose the freedom of his spiritual powers, which, being created for freedom of action, suffer a kind of fatal inability to accomplish any virtue. In his

soul, the sinner is aware of the powers of his soul, but at the same time he feels that they are bound by unbreakable chains: "*And he is caught in the cords of his sin*" (Prov 5:22). To this add the horrible torment arising from the sins themselves, from the consciousness of his own foolishness during his earthly life, and from the image of the angered Creator. Even in this present life, sin binds and destroys the soul. What God-fearing man does not know what sorrow and oppression strike his soul, what torturing, burning fire rages in his breast when he has sinned? But in addition to binding and destroying the soul (as it does temporarily), sin also destroys the soul eternally if we do not repent with our whole heart of our sins and our iniquities. Here is more experiential proof that sin destroys the soul both temporarily and eternally. If a God-fearing person goes to sleep without repenting of the sin, or sins, committed during the day and lying heavy on his soul, these torments will accompany him the whole night, until he has repented of his sins in his heart and washed them away with tears. (This is my experience.) The torments of sin will wake him from pleasant sleep, because his soul will be oppressed, bound by the bonds of sin. Now, suppose that the man who has gone to sleep without repenting, still tortured by his sin, is seized by death during the night. Is it not obvious that his soul will go into the other life in torment? Since there is no repentance after death, he will be tormented there according to the measure of his sins. The Holy Scriptures also testify to this (Matt 25:46).

Be vigilant over yourselves and your passions, especially in your everyday home life, where the passions fearlessly peek out like moles in a safe place. Outside our home, some of these passions are frequently hidden by other more attractive passions, giving us no opportunity to drive away these black moles that undermine the wholeness of our soul.

* * *

In the soul of a pious, God-fearing man, spiritual communion with God occurs invisibly. Like a father or a stern teacher, the Lord either approves or condemns our thoughts, desires, and intentions. He either says that it is good, or that it is bad, rewarding us for the good and punishing us for the evil. All this is immediately evident to the soul.

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If you begin to fulfill the commandments in small things, you will begin to fulfill the commandments in greater things: the small always leads to the greater. Begin by fulfilling the commandment to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays, or the tenth commandment regarding evil thoughts and desires, and you will eventually fulfill all the commandments. "*He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much*" (Luke 16:10).

O man, who only dreams of this perishable life and does not think of the eternal, heavenly life! Consider: what is your transitory life? It is a constant laying on of fuel (meaning food) in order that the fire of our life may continue to burn and not grow feeble, in order that our house (meaning the body) should remain warm, and that the continually fading life of our body should be restored by means of the nourishing parts of the organisms of other living creatures, who are deprived of life for the life of our body. Indeed, what an insignificant cobweb your life is, O man! You are obliged twice daily to strengthen the inner supports of your body to keep it from falling apart (i.e., you strengthen yourself twice daily with food and drink), and every night you must lock up your soul within your body, shutting up all the sensations of the body, like shutters in a house, so that the soul may not live outside the body, but within it, giving it warmth and life. What a cobweb your life is, how easily torn apart! Be humble and reverent before eternal Life!

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Truth is the foundation and the source of the variety of all creation. Let truth be also the foundation of all your deeds (both inward and outward), especially your prayer. Let your whole life—all your works, all your thoughts, and all your desires—be established in truth.

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Take the trouble to spend a single day doing God's commandments, and you will see for yourself, you will feel in your own heart, how good it is to fulfill God's will. After all, God's will for us is life and eternal blessedness. Love God with all your heart, or at least as much as you love your parents. Value with all your strength His love and His benefits to you. Remember in your mind and heart how He gave you existence and with it all good things, how endlessly He bears with your sins, how endlessly He forgives them for

the sake of your heartfelt repentance, through the power of the suffering and Crucifixion of His Only-begotten Son. Remember what blessedness He has promised you in eternity, if you are faithful to Him. Recall His endlessly great and manifold mercies. Furthermore, love every man as yourself. Do not wish him anything that you would not wish for yourself. Think, feel for him just as you would think and feel for yourself; do not wish to see in him anything that you do not wish to see in yourself; do not let your memory keep in it any evil done to you by others, just as you would like the evil done by you to be forgiven by others. Do not intentionally imagine, either in yourself or in another, anything sinful or impure. Believe others to be as well-intentioned as yourself. In general, if you do not see clearly that they have evil intentions, do unto them as you would to yourself, or at the very least do not do unto them as you would not do unto yourself. If you do all this, then you will see what you will acquire in your heart, what peace, what blessedness! You will be in heaven before heaven, in heaven on earth before the eternal heaven. "*For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you*" (Luke 17:21), says the Lord. "*He who abides in love,*" teaches the Apostle, "*abides in God, and God in him*" (1 John 4:16).

"Worship God in spirit and in truth." Is it in truth, for example, that you say, "Hallowed be Thy Name"? Do you truly desire for God's name to be hallowed by your good works and the virtues of others? When you say, "Thy Kingdom come," do you indeed desire the coming of God's Kingdom? Do you wish to be the abode of the Spirit of God, and not the abode of sin? Would you not more willingly live in sin? When you say, "Thy will be done," do you not rather seek your own will than the will of God? Yes, it is so! When you say, "Give us this day our daily bread," are you not actually saying in your heart, "I do not need to ask this of You. I have enough without asking; let the poor ask for this"? Or do we perhaps greedily seek for more, not satisfied with little, or what God has given us? We do not thank God for what we have, but we should! In the prayer "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," do not you think to yourself, "God knows that I am not such a great sinner. It seems to me that I do not live any worse than others, and there is no need for me to ask for my sins to be forgiven"? Or else, when you pray these words, is there not some displeasure or anger in your heart against anyone? For if there is, you lie shamelessly before God in your prayer. You say, "And lead us not into temptation," but do you not yourself rush heedlessly into every sin, without

even being tempted? You say, “Deliver us from the evil one,” but do you not live in friendship with the devil and with evil of every kind, of which the devil is chief? Take care, then, that your tongue be not in discord with your heart. See that you do not lie to God in your prayer. Always keep this in mind when you say the Lord’s Prayer or any other prayer. Pay attention to whether or not your heart agrees with everything your tongue utters.

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The purer the heart is, the more expansive it is, and the more able it is to find room inside it for a greater number of beloved. But the more sinful it is, the more constricted it becomes, and the fewer loved ones can it fit in itself, until it becomes capable exclusively of self-love, which is not love at all. We love ourselves in objects unworthy of the immortal soul—in silver and gold, in debauchery, in drunkenness, and other such things.

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If God gives an invincible, incomprehensible divine power to the life-giving Cross, then why should it be incredible that He gives a similar incomprehensible power to regenerate our nature to the most-pure, awesome, and life-giving sacrament of His Body and Blood? O, how great are You, Lord! And how wonderful are Your works! How endless is Your omnipotence! Whatever You touch by Your power and grace becomes life-giving.

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If you wish to correct anyone’s fault, do not think of correcting him only by yourself. More often than not, in such situations we do more harm than good, because we are also full of passions, such as pride and the irritability that arises from it. “*O cast thy care upon the Lord*” (Psalm 54:23), and pray to God “*Who triest the very hearts and reins*” (Psalm 7:10), with all your heart, that He Himself will enlighten the mind and heart of that person. If He sees that your prayer breathes love, and that it really comes from the depth of your heart, He will certainly fulfill the desire of your heart, and, seeing the change that has taken place in him for whom you have prayed,

you will soon say that this is the work of "*the right hand of God, the Most High*" (Psalm 76:11).

Who is it that so wisely, delicately, and beautifully arranges and transforms the shapeless, formless substance of the earth into flowers? Who gives them their amazing form? Creator, help us honor Your wisdom, goodness, and omnipotence in the beauty of your flowers.

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Our inward disposition, even when unexpressed by outward signs, strongly affects the inward disposition of others. This happens all the time, but not everyone notices it. Let us suppose that I am angry, or that I have unkind thoughts about someone; he feels it, and unwittingly begins to have unkind thoughts about me. There is a certain communication between our souls, separate from our physical senses. As for the action of our soul on others through the physical senses, one soul can have an incredible effect on another through the sense of sight, even when a person is at a distance from me, as long as he is visible and alone when I look at him. Thus, through the eyes, one can place another person in an awkward position, even confuse him. It has happened to me more than once that when I look fixedly out of the window of my house at the people passing by, they, as if drawn by some power to the window from which I looked, turned to the window, trying to find a human face in it. Others became confused, suddenly quickened their pace and fidgeted with their appearance, readjusting their ties, hats, etc. There is some kind of mystery here.

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Observe the difference between the presence of the life-giving Spirit and the presence of the spirit that deadens and destroys your soul. When there are good thoughts in your soul, you feel joyful and light. When peace and joy are in your heart, the spirit of good, the Holy Spirit, is within you. When evil thoughts or evil motions of the heart arise inside you, you feel sick and oppressed. When you are inwardly troubled, the evil, cunning spirit is within you. When the spirit of evil is in us, together with sorrow and confusion in our heart, we generally feel difficulty in drawing near to God with our hearts, because the evil spirit binds our soul and will not let it raise itself to God. The evil spirit is a spirit of doubt, unbelief, passions, sorrows,

grief, and confusion, but the good spirit is a spirit of undoubting faith, virtue, spiritual freedom, and great-heartedness, a spirit of peace and joy. Know by these signs when the Spirit of God is within you and when the spirit of evil. As often as possible, raise your grateful heart to the Most-holy Spirit Who gives you life and light, and flee with all your strength from doubt, unbelief, and the passions through which the evil serpent, the thief and destroyer of our souls, creeps in.

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Sometimes in the lives of pious Christians there are hours when God seems to have entirely abandoned them. These are the hours of the power of darkness, and then the person from the depths of his heart cries unto God, “Why have You turned Your face from me, O everlasting Light? For a strange darkness has covered me, the darkness of the accursed evil Satan, and has obscured my soul. It is painful for my soul to be in his torturous darkness, which gives a foretaste of the torments and darkness of hell. Turn me, O Saviour, to the light of Your commandments and make straight my spiritual way, I fervently pray You.”

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If you do not experience the snares of the evil spirit, you will neither know nor appreciate the benefits bestowed on you by the Holy Spirit as you should. By not coming to know the spirit that destroys, you will not come to know the Spirit that gives life. Only the direct opposition of good and evil, of life and death, allow us to clearly know the one and the other. If you are not subjected to sorrows and the potential of bodily or spiritual death, you will never truly know the Saviour, the Giver of Life, who delivers us from these calamities and from spiritual death. Jesus Christ is the consolation, joy, life, peace, and greatness of our hearts! Glory to God, the Most Wise and Most Gracious, that He allows the spirit of evil and death to tempt and torment us! Otherwise, how could we even begin to sufficiently appreciate and value the consolation of grace, the comfort of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, the Giver of Life?

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The Lord God is life itself and the superabundance of life. From eternity, according to St Gregory the Theologian, He acts in three Persons and remains Threefold—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You ask how there can be Three Persons in One God? I answer: I do not understand how, but I know that it must be so and cannot be otherwise. You further ask: why is the Third Person of the Trinity called the Spirit, and why is He a separate Person, when God is all Spirit? I answer: God's Spirit is called Spirit in relation to His creatures. God breathed through His hypostatic Spirit, and the hand of the life-creating Spirit created an innumerable multitude of spirits: "*all the host of them by the Breath of His mouth*" (Psalm 32:6). He breathed through His Spirit into the human body, "*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being"* (Gen 2:7), and from this breath men were born and will yet be born until the end of the world, according to the commandment: "*Be fruitful and multiply*" (Gen 2:28). If by His Holy Spirit God has created so many personal souls, how can the Holy Spirit Himself not be a Person, a personal, creating Being? "*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit*" (John 3:8). You see that the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit as a divine Hypostasis. If there are countless multitudes of individual created spirits, then why should God Himself remain without His Spirit as an independent, hypostatic Person? Is not the Son, the personal and living Wisdom of the Father, indispensable in God? Look at yourself. You are created, but even in you there is such wisdom that many are astounded; sometimes you even create wonderful things, and you are honored as the creator of these things. And yet this is only you, an insignificant, infirm creature. Consider how can there not be a personal Wisdom in God? How can Divinity not have a personal Wisdom? How can there not be a Creator in the Godhead? How can God not have His own Living, Self-existent Wisdom? Look at everything in the world, how wise everything is! How in the smallest details you see the amazing wisdom and the wonderful work of the All-wise Thought with its astounding exactness and faultless purity! How can there be no personal Wisdom in God? Consider, how can God, Who has created a multitude of reasonable, individual, wise, living creatures, not give birth to Personal Wisdom from Himself? Is it not in accordance with all the other perfections of the Creator? Thus, in God there must be a hypostatic

Wisdom, the hypostatic Word of the Father, as well as the Life-giving Holy Spirit, Who proceeds from the Father and Who abides in the Son. In you there is breath, material and impersonal, while in God, as life itself, there is a Personal Spirit, indivisible, simple, and giving life to all things.

The unnatural mastery of the flesh over the spirit is expressed, among other things, by the fact that the spirit is seemingly buried within the flesh and bound by it. This is especially obvious in the services. Then, a person often draws near to God with his mouth, superficially, falsely, but not with his heart, his spirit, and thus he does not worship God truly. Indeed, we often live as though we had no spirit in us, and the highest degree of human depravity is manifested when the spirit is completely stifled and a person becomes as though flesh alone. "*My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh*" (Gen 6:3). Pay close attention to our reverence for God, and you will see how in this respect the flesh endeavors to dominate over the spirit. In the saints we see the dominance of the spirit over the flesh, because they live by the spirit and see the spirit active in the whole world through the wisdom, the omnipotence, and goodness of God. They see the stamp of the Spirit in all phenomena, in all deeds. In sensual people, the dominance of the flesh over the spirit is shown by their only seeing what is obvious to their physical senses; in fact, as the saying goes, they do not see beyond their nose. The carnal, sensual man looks at the world and sees it as an unreasoning animal does: he does not marvel at the Wisdom, the everlasting Power, and the Goodness of the Creator. When he reads a holy book, he sees in it only the letter. When he prays, he says the prayers mechanically, without penetrating into their spirit. He does not know the art of worshipping in spirit and in truth. The flesh predominates also in secular education. (Look, are pupils in the schools taught the most important Christian activity—prayer? Are they taught to see God?) The flesh will prevail in the world until the end of time. "*Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?*" (Luke 18:8). Unbelief is the work of the flesh, as it was in the beginning of the world.

It is pleasing to God when a person begins to notice His action in the heart, because He is Light and Truth. The devil especially fears this, being himself darkness and falsehood, and darkness cannot approach the light, lest its works be revealed. The devil is powerful only in darkness, deceit, and falsehood; reveal his falsehood, place it before the light, and everything will disappear. He leads people into every passion through deceit, thereby

lulling them to sleep and preventing their seeing things in their true light. The devil's cover of darkness lies over a great many things.

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Why does the sinful soul not receive forgiveness of sins until it feels all their foolishness, all their destructiveness, and all their falsity with the whole heart? Because the heart is our soul; since it committed the sins, considering them at the time pleasant and attractive, it must now repent of them and recognize them as leading to destruction, as entirely false. This repentance must be accomplished with pain in the heart, since the desire to sin usually comes from the heart.

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Do not be disturbed when anger rages inside you and threatens to overflow in a torrent of bitter words, but command it to be silent and to die within you. Otherwise, the more it sees you submissive, the more it flows unimpeded from your lips, the sooner will it master you. When water held behind a dam finds a hole, it gradually widens it as it pours through. If the dam is not bulwarked in time, finally, as a result of laziness on our part and the unimpeded power of the water, it becomes very difficult, even impossible, to stop the water from breaking through the dam. The same is true with anger hidden in the heart of man. If we let it pierce through once, twice, and thrice, it will pour out more and more powerfully, and finally it will break through and overflow your inner dam. Be aware that waters of anger lie in wait in your soul. As the psalmist said, "*the waters are come in, even unto my soul*" (Psalm 68:1).

When you sin against God, and your sins torment and burn you, then quickly seek the only eternal and living Sacrifice for sins, and lay your sins before the face of that Sacrifice. Do not think you can save yourself.

* * *

The Lord might have made the whole world, heaven and earth, into His own body. Or, instead of creating the world, He might have created for Himself a temple for His body. It is only on your account that He deigned to create for Himself a Body similar to your own, in order to save you. Having

created the world from nothing, He has also created His Body out of a small part of the world in order to give life to you, leaving the world to remain as He created it. O the goodness and mercy of God! "*For we are members of His Body*" (Eph 5:30) through the communion of His Life-giving Mysteries!

The world, as the work of the living, Most-wise God, is full of life. Everywhere and in all things we find His life and wisdom, in the world as a whole as well as its constituent parts we see the reflection of the divine thought. This is truly a book, from which we may learn to known God, though not as clearly as in Revelation. Before the world existed, there was only the living, eternal God. When the world was called into being from non-being, God, of course, did not become limited; all His fullness of life and limitlessness have remained in Him. But this fullness of life and limitlessness are now also evident in his living and organic creation which is infinitely various, all endued with life.

* * *

The limits of the world and man are finite. The world is a foothold for earthly creatures, to prevent them from disappearing in the vastness of space. The Words of Scripture speak more truly and clearly about the world than the world itself or the layers of the earth's crust. The words of nature are stuck inside nature, dead and voiceless, and cannot express anything definite. "*Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?"* (Job 38:4). Were you with God when He created the universe? "*Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, Or as His counselor has taught Him?"* (Isa 40:13). And yet you geologists boast that you have understood the mind of the Lord in the arrangement of the layers of the crust, and insist on this in defiance of Holy Scripture! You believe more in the dead letters of the earthly strata, in dead earth, than in the divinely inspired words of the great prophet Moses, who saw God.

You do not understand how the saints in Heaven can hear us when we pray to them? But how do the rays of the sun come down from the sky to illuminate the whole world? The saints are the same thing in the spiritual world as the rays of the sun are in the physical. God is the eternal, life-giving Sun, and the saints are the rays of this spiritual Sun. Since the eyes of the Lord constantly gaze at the earth and its creatures, the eyes of the

saints cannot but turn in the same direction as the providential gaze of the Lord of creation at the treasures of their heart (their bodies, works, holy places, and people devoted to them). "*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Matt 6:21). You know how quickly, how far, and how clearly the heart can see (especially objects of the spiritual world); you notice this in all sciences, especially in the spiritual ones, where much is learned by faith only (i.e., through the eyes of the heart). The heart is the eye of human existence. The purer it is, the quicker, farther, and clearer it can see. But God's saints have refined this spiritual eye, even during their lifetime, to the highest degree of purity possible for mankind, and after their death, when they have become united with God, through God's grace the limits of this vision become even more expansive. This is why the saints see very clearly, widely, and far; this is how they see our spiritual needs. They see and hear all those who call on them with their whole hearts—that is, those whose spiritual eyes are fixed straight upon them, undimmed by doubt. In other words, the eyes of the heart of those who pray meet the eyes, so to speak, of those to whom they pray. This is a mysterious vision! Those who have experienced this will understand what I am saying. This is why it is so easy to communicate with the saints! It is only necessary to purify the eye of the heart, to fix it firmly on a saint that you revere, to pray to him for what you desire, and you will receive it. What is God in reference to sight? He is all sight, all light, all knowledge. He is everywhere present, both in Heaven and on earth, and He sees everything in every place. "*The eyes of the Lord are in every place, Keeping watch on the evil and the good*" (Prov 15:3).

A heartfelt belief in the spiritual world, especially in the all-enlightening and life-giving Sun, enlivens and gives joy to the soul with a pure conscience. Faith should go as deep as spiritual vision. This means that the soul should stand above everything sensual, carnal, above its darkened nature, and it should penetrate into the spiritual world, preferably with the purified eyes of the heart. Here, it will be good for the soul, for here is its true life, its peace, and its joy. I know this from experience.

* * *

Imagination and mental representation is the vision of the heart or the soul, creating or reproducing a certain object; therefore, this vision is rapid,

instantaneous, and bears a spiritual character. It is a photograph of a certain object made by the soul. Reason is an artist who paints a picture from the mental photograph.

* * *

If the Lord were not long-suffering, if He were not the Lover of mankind, would He have endured our terrible offenses? Would He have become incarnate? Would He have suffered and died for you? Would He have given you His Most-pure Body and Blood, which even the angels regard with fear and trembling? Would He have saved you from sin and spiritual death so many countless times? No, He would have said, "Be tormented, since you are so evil by nature; I will not deliver you again after having delivered you so often before." But instead, He bears the countless offenses of our entire life, and still He waits for our conversion. Glorify, then, His love and long-suffering. Imagine what life would be like without Him, without His salvation. Horror and trembling fill the soul at the very thought. But impenitent sinners will indeed be overtaken in the end by God's wrath "*in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God*" (Rom 2:5).

When you are about to pray to our Lady, the Holy Virgin, be firmly assured before beginning that you will not depart from Her without having received mercy. To think thus and to have confidence in Her is proper and right. She is the all-merciful Mother of the all-merciful God the Word, and all ages and all Christian churches praise Her incalculably great and innumerable mercies. Indeed, She is an abyss of mercies and goodness, as is said of Her in the canon to the Hodegetria (the one who lights the Way).[4] Therefore, to pray to Her without such assurance would be foolish and brazen, and our wavering faith would offend Her goodness, just as God's goodness is offended when people pray to Him without hoping to receive what they pray for. How do people usually ask for help of any great and rich man whose kindness is well known and has been proved on many occasions? Generally they ask with complete assurance and hope of receiving from Him that which they desire. Likewise, in prayer we must neither doubt nor be faint-hearted.

In the same way as a mother teaches her child to walk, God teaches us to have living faith in Him. A mother will make the child stand, walk away

from him, then tell him to come to her. The child cries without his mother; he wants to go to her, but he is afraid to take the first step. He gathers his courage, takes a step, and falls down. The Lord teaches us faith in a similar way (since faith is a spiritual path). Our faith is as weak, as rudimentary as a toddler's ability to walk. The Lord leaves a person without His help and allows him to be assailed by the devil or various distresses and afflictions, and afterward, when he is in extreme need of deliverance (for we are usually not ready to go to Him until we are in desperate need of His help), He bids us look at Him (you must absolutely look at Him!) and approach Him for help. The Christian endeavors to do so; he opens the eyes of his heart (just as the child moves its feet) and tries to see the Lord with them; but his heart, ignorant of how to see God, is afraid of its own boldness, and it stumbles and falls. The enemy and our inherited sinful perversion close the newly opened eyes of the heart and cut the person off from God, so that he cannot approach Him, though God is near, ready to take him into His arms. God must be approached with faith, and an effort must be made to see Him with the spiritual eyes of faith. Then He will Himself stretch out His helping hand and take the man into His arms and drive away the enemies. The Christian truly feels that he has fallen into the arms of the Saviour Himself. Glory to Your goodness and wisdom, O Lord! Thus, during attacks of the devil, and in every sorrow, we must see clearly with the eyes of the heart, as though the Saviour, the Lover of mankind, stands before us. We must look at Him boldly, our inexhaustible treasury of goodness and mercies, and pray to Him with all our hearts, that He will give us a portion of His inexhaustible fountain of blessings and spiritual help. If we do this, we shall immediately receive an answer to our prayers. The most important thing is faith, the spiritual vision of the Lord and the hope of receiving everything from Him, the All-good One. This is the truth! This is from experience! Thus God also teaches us to acknowledge our extreme moral helplessness without Him, to be contrite in heart, and to cultivate a constantly prayerful disposition.

The Christian has no reason to have any anger in his heart against anyone. Anger, as anger, is the work of the devil, but the Christian must only have love in his heart. Since love thinks no evil, he cannot have any ill-will against anyone. For example, I must not (without good reason) think that anyone is angry or proud or sinful in any other way, nor must I think that it will make him proud if I show him respect, or that if I forgive him he

will again offend me and mock me. We must not let anger in any form nest in our heart. As it is, anger appears in far too many forms.

* * *

The peace and abundance of life in the heart after communion is a great, inestimable gift of our Lord Jesus Christ, surpassing all other possible material gifts put together. Without peace in the soul, when the heart is constricted and in pain, no one can avail himself of any blessings, either material or spiritual. During such times, the delights that come from the feeling of truth, goodness, and beauty do not exist for him, because the very center of his life—the heart, the inner man himself—is oppressed and slain.

* * *

Unite your soul to God through heartfelt faith, and you will be able to accomplish everything. Do powerful, invisible, sleepless enemies wage war against you? You will conquer them. Are these enemies visible, external? You will conquer them also. Do passions torture you? You will overcome them. Are you crushed with sorrows? You will survive them. Have you fallen into despondency? You will receive courage. With faith, you will be able to conquer everything, and even the Kingdom of Heaven will be yours. Faith is the greatest blessing of the earthly life; it unites man to God, and it gives him strength and victory in Him. "*But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him*" (1 Cor 6:17).

God in His goodness has granted us, undeserving as we are, to see and enjoy the sun and its light, and He will allow us also to enjoy His own unapproachable light. Let the light of the sun be our pledge, as well as the gentle light of the holy glory of the Heavenly Father, His only Son, given to us, and the Spirit of love bestowed on our hearts.

* * *

When I look at God's world, what do I see? Everywhere I see extraordinary variety and playfulness of life—in the animal kingdom of four-footed beasts, reptiles, insects, birds, and fish. Now one may ask why is there such difficulty and sorrow in mankind's manner of living, especially for those who are zealous and pious? God has everywhere plenteously

diffused life, abundance, and joy, and all creatures, with the exception of man, glorify the Creator by their contentment, their life, and their playful joy. Why, then, is there this discord between me and the world around me? Am I not a creature of the same Creator? The answer to this question is simple. Our life is poisoned, either by our sin or the bodiless enemy (chiefly by him, especially if you have given yourself to a life of piety). The life of a person, of a true Christian, is in the future, in the age to come. There, all joys and total blessedness will be given to him. But here he is only an exile under punishment; here sometimes the whole of nature takes up arms against him for his sins, not to speak of the eternal enemy, who "*walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Pet 5:8). Therefore, I am not distressed by the joy and abundance everywhere in the world and the corresponding lack of both in my life; I do not look morosely at the joy and freedom of God's creatures. I have within me an executioner for my sins; he is ever with me and strikes me. But there will be joys for me also, only not here, but in the world to come.

Looking at God's world, everywhere I see God's extraordinary generosity in the gifts of nature. The surface of the earth is like the richest table prepared with abundance and variety by the most loving and generous of hosts. The depths of the waters also serve to feed mankind. What shall be said of the animals, the four-footed beasts and birds? Even here, what generosity is manifested in food and clothes for mankind! The Lord's mercies are innumerable. Look at everything the earth supplies in summer and autumn! Every Christian, especially the priest, should imitate God's generosity. Let your table be open to everybody, like the table of the Lord. The miser is an enemy of the Lord.

* * *

The tree firmly fixed into the earth by its roots grows and brings forth fruit. The soul of a man firmly fixed in God through faith and love, like spiritual roots, also lives, grows spiritually, and produces the fruits of God-pleasing virtue, through which the soul lives now and shall live in the world to come. The tree, when uprooted from the ground, ceases to live the life it received from the soil through the roots. Similarly, the soul of a man who has lost faith and love for God and does not dwell in God, in Whom alone he can live, spiritually dies. God is fertile earth for the soul.

* * *

To avoid daily bondage to the passions and the devil, you must give yourself a goal, have this goal constantly in view, and strive to accomplish it, conquering all obstacles with the name of the Lord. What is this goal? The Kingdom of God, the divine palace of glory, prepared for believers from the creation of the world. But since this goal can only be reached by certain well-known methods, it is necessary to use them. And what are these methods? Faith, hope, and love, especially love. Believe, hope, and love, especially love, disregarding all obstacles. Love God above everything and your neighbor as yourself. If you do not have sufficient strength to preserve these inestimable treasures in your heart, fall down more often at the feet of the God of Love. "*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you*" (Matt 7:7), for He Who has promised is faithful. Walking, sitting, lying down, conversing, or working, at all times pray with your whole heart that faith and love may be given to you. You have not yet asked for them as you should, that is, with insistence and constancy, with the firm desire of obtaining them. Say to yourself, "I will begin to do so from this very moment."

When you encounter obstacles placed on your path to God by the devil, such as doubt, unbelief of heart, occasional anger with persons worthy of absolute respect and love, as well as various other passions, do not be disturbed by them. Know that they are but the smoke of the enemy, which will be dispersed at a command from the Lord Jesus Christ.

* * *

What should our most important concert be when educating the youth? We must chiefly strive to enlighten the eyes of their understanding (Eph 1:18). Have you not noticed that our heart acts first in our life, and in nearly all acquisition of knowledge the heart sees certain truths (ideas) before the mind comes to understand them? This is how knowledge is acquired: the heart understands at once, indivisibly, instantaneously; afterward, this single action of the heart's vision is transmitted to the mind, and there divided into categories such as "preceding" or "subsequent." The sight of the heart is analyzed by the mind. The idea belongs to the heart and not to the mind. In other words, it belongs to the inner man, not to the outer man. Therefore, to

have the eyes of their understanding enlightened (Eph 1:18) is a very important matter in acquiring knowledge, but especially the truth of faith and moral law.

The future life is the perfect purity of the heart gradually purified in this world, a heart more often than not closed off and darkened by sin and by the devil's inspiration. However, sometimes, under the influence of God's grace, the heart brightens and sees God, uniting with Him most truly during prayer and in the sacrament of Holy Communion.

* * *

How should we keep the feasts of the Church? We celebrate either an event (delving into the significance of the event, its purpose, and the spiritual fruits it gives to the faithful) or a person, such as our Lord, His Mother, the angels, the saints (delving into the relationship of that person to God and mankind and his beneficial influence on God's Church in general). It is necessary to deeply consider the history of the event or life of the person with our whole heart, to imbibe them, so to speak; otherwise, the feast will be incomplete, not pleasing to God. The feasts must influence our life and enliven and stimulate our faith in future blessings, encouraging us to live a pious, good way of life. Yet the feasts are mostly spent in sin, greeted with unbelieving, cold hearts, often wholly unprepared to feel the great mercies that God has given us through the particular event or person whose feast is celebrated.

* * *

So what if there is evil in your soul? "Don't sweep everything that's in the oven onto the table."[5] But let it be known to God alone, Who knows everything that is secret and concealed, and do not show your uncleanness to others. Do not infect them with the breath of the evil concealed inside you; shut the door to the oven. Tell God your grief, that your soul is full of wickedness, and that your life is near to hell, but to other people show a bright and pleasant face. What have they to do with your madness? Confess your soul's sickness to your spiritual father or to a true friend, so that they may teach you, guide you, and restrain you.

* * *

As you look up at the sky, contemplate the Lord Jesus, for it was from the heights that He appeared to the proto-martyr Stephen and to Saul, and pray to Him for your salvation. These visitations do not mean that He only opens the heavens at certain moments to look down at the saints as though through an opened window; rather, they show that He always looks down from the heavens on us all and sees our actions, words, thoughts, and intentions. You must have been convinced of this on many occasions from your own experience when you lifted up your eyes to the heavens and received miraculous and wonderful help from Him. This only means that in the above-mentioned cases He openly revealed Himself, manifesting Himself in the heavens.

* * *

To sin is detrimental and foolish, for the sinner begins to despise himself and turns away from human society. The constriction of his heart and the worm gnawing at it make any human communication oppressive to him, since its expansiveness and joy do not correspond with the character of his own life. The sinner feels oppressed in God's wide world, because the world is the work of the Most-holy and Righteous God, and the sinner who does not obey God's laws, the laws of love and peace, is an outcast from God's creation, for whom there is no place in the world. The reason why he feels so afflicted is that he is pursued by God, by his own conscience, and by all of creation.

* * *

Who suffers most from doubting, unbelieving, blasphemous thoughts—the object of doubt, unbelief, blasphemy, or the doubter, unbeliever, blasphemer himself? Of course the latter. "*There were they afraid, where no fear was"* (Psalm 52:6 [from *A Psalter for Prayer*]). He is tortured by his doubt, unbelief, and blasphemy; meanwhile, the object of his agony remains firm, immovable, and evidently has the better of him, because it makes him change his mind for the sake of his own calm, and does not allow him to grow calm until he has repented of his former false opinions and has adopted more proper and true ones. Therefore, it is foolish to waver and be disturbed, still more to become fainthearted and despondent when, during

prayer or at any other time, doubting, faithless, blasphemous thoughts appear in your mind. They are no more than the delusion of Satan.

* * *

Anger or any other passion that takes root in the heart has a tendency, according to the inexorable law of evil, to discharge itself visibly. This is why it is usually said of an angry or irritated person that he has "taken it out" on someone. This is the problem with evil—it does not remain in the heart, but forces its way out. From this, it should be already obvious that the lord of evil is very powerful and has a wide domain over which he reigns. "*The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one*" (1 John 5:19). As expanding gases in a closed container build up pressure until they explode, so the passions, the breath of the evil spirit, once they fill the heart, strive to rush out of one person to inundate others and infect the souls of others through their foulness.

If God has granted us existence, the greatest gift of His goodness; if, after we fell away from Him from life into death, He gave us His Son for our rebirth and reentry into life; how small in proportion are all other gifts which we ask of Him in prayer, and how easy it is for Him to give them to us at the first word of true faith, if they are really necessary for us! How unpardonably we act when we doubt that we shall obtain what we ask of God in prayer. The Lord said plainly, "*Ask, and it will be given to you*" (Matt 7:7).

Here in this vain, adulterous, and sinful world, our souls and bodies are continually and often imperceptibly corrupted "*where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal*" (Matt 6:19) the treasures of the soul: "*righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Rom 14:17). What is a good remedy against the continual, sinful corruption of these spiritual thieves? Prayer of repentance and faith. It revives and resurrects our souls, which are rotting in seductive carnal desires, and it drives away the bodiless thieves. Prayer is a scourge for them, while for us it is a source of power, life, and salvation. Glory to God for this! Prayer protects and delivers us from sin. It is good for us to live with the prayer of faith in our hearts, for during prayer we live with the Lord, Who has promised all good things to those who ask Him: "*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks*

receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened" (Matt 7:7–8). Glory to You, O Lord, for Your words of truth. Lord! Grant to all those who ask many blessing of You through my unworthiness, and grant the petitions of their hearts. Amen. So be it!

If you desire God to quickly give you heartfelt faith in prayer, strive with all your heart to speak and do everything to other people sincerely, and never be deceitful in your dealings with them. If you are straightforward and truthful with others, then God will give you sincerity and genuine faith. God does not easily accept the prayer of a person who is not straightforward in his dealing with other people, because He wishes to give him a clear sense that he is insincere with other people, and therefore cannot be perfectly sincere with God.

* * *

O Man subjected to passions, what do you want? Life, you say. What are you so busy with? Life. But are you truly living? Reason and experience force me to say that you are not. Then what constitutes true life? Reason and experience again have the answer: faith, hope, and love. The life of the soul is God. Living faith in Him and love for my neighbor—these are the peace and breadth of my heart, for without them I am the slave of sin, the prisoner of passion, and my life is spent in sorrow and constraint.

* * *

Even here on earth I rest in Christ and with Christ. How can I not believe that eternal rest in Him awaits me after death, after the struggle against earthly enemies? Here without Christ I feel oppressed and in pain. How can I not believe that it will be still more grievous to be without Christ there, when He will finally cast me away from His face? Thus, the present state of our souls foreshadows the future. The future will be a continuation of our present inner disposition. The difference is only one of degree—for the righteous, the future will be the fullness of eternal glory, for sinners, the fullness of everlasting torment.

* * *

"*But it is good for me to cleave unto God*" (Psalm 72:28), said David, who had tasted the sweetness of prayer and glorification of God. Other men confirm this, as do I, a sinner. Observe: even here on earth it is good to draw near to God, while we are yet in the sinful flesh, which has much that is agreeable and disagreeable in itself. Therefore, how good will it be to unite with God there, in heaven! The blessedness of union with God here on earth is an image and pledge of the blessedness of union with God after death, in eternity. You see, then, how good, merciful, and true the Creator is! In order to assure you of the future blessedness of union with Him, He allows you to experience the beginning of this blessedness here on earth when you approach Him sincerely. Yes, even here, my invisible soul truly finds rest in the invisible God; how much more, then, will it rest in Him when it is separated from the body.

The spirit is powerful, mighty, and therefore it easily bears a heavy substance; the flesh is sluggish, is feeble, and is therefore easily overwhelmed by its own natural substance. This is why God, by the power of His Word, upholds all things as though they were nothing (Heb 1:3). Similarly the spirit of a man blessed with grace easily conquers his own flesh (with God's help), and he can even help others subject their flesh to their spirit (as we see in the saints). He easily manages the words of prayer, making them all spirit, while the carnal man is constantly subject to his flesh, and battles with the words of prayer, which he is unable to endue with spirit, being flesh himself. He is unable to penetrate into its pure, holy spirit with his own impure, carnal spirit.

Man constantly perishes through sin, and therefore he requires a daily Saviour. This Saviour is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. All you must do is call upon Him inwardly with living, prescient faith in your salvation, and He will save you. Thus has He miraculously saved me a countless number of times; this salvation was as obvious to me as, for instance, the visit of a deliverer to a prison from which he frees the prisoner. It is necessary for a priest to experience for himself the power of faith, the sweetness of prayer, and the remission of sins, and also to experience cases when prayer is unsuccessful, as well as spiritual sorrows and the consolations of grace, so that in his prayer to God for the faithful he may say, "Give unto them the same blessings as those which You always give to my unworthy self." In this way, the priest can makes requests based on experience.

* * *

“He is near to his heart.” This is commonly said of two people of unequal rank, one of whom is a patron of the other. And the one who has been honored with the intimacy of a higher person knows this, and is also close to him in his own heart. It is thus between God and those who serve Him with a pure heart. God is always near to their heart, and they are near God’s heart. It should also be the same during the prayer of every Christian—when praying, we must absolutely be near to God in our heart. All that is good and sincere in our interaction with our fellow men should be transferred to God.

* * *

Remember that you are always walking in the presence of the sweetest Jesus. Say to yourself more often: I wish to live in such a way that my life may give joy to my Beloved, crucified for my sake on the cross. Above all, I will take holy Love for the companion and friend of my life, Love that fits everyone into my heart, making me desire the salvation of all, making me rejoice with those who rejoice, and making me weep with those who weep. This will especially comfort Christ, my Comforter.

* * *

Parents and teachers! Beware and be very careful not to let your children have fits of temper in front of you; otherwise, they will soon forget to value your love. Their hearts will be corrupted with anger; they will soon lose holy, true, glowing love from their hearts, and when they reach maturity, they will complain bitterly that in their youth you spoiled them too much and encouraged them in their foul moods. Fits of temper will give birth to a rotten heart, a rusted heart. They eat away at love like a moth, they plant the seed of malice. They are an abomination to the Lord.

* * *

The mystery of purification from sins occurs especially in the church. Therefore, you should have respect for the place where your soul is cleansed from all spiritual impurities, where you are reconciled with God,

where you receive the true life of the spirit. How many times has the Lord here granted me forgiveness of my sins, without which I could not have enjoyed God's gifts—the greatest gift of life itself, the gifts of peace, joy, and earthly blessings. Glory to You, Jesus Christ, Son of God. "*And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world*" (1 John 2:2).

Nothing is more changeable than matter; it changes into millions of forms by natural processes, according to the laws of the Creator, not to mention miraculous changes, such as fire transforming into dew, water into blood, water into wine, the rod into the serpent. Even mankind can sometimes change matter into a thousand different forms. What can we therefore say of God, Who has created everything? The nature of matter is its mutability. God, however, neither acts nor desires to act thus with a reasonable spirit—the nature of the spirit is immutability. To strive to become perfect in good works is the act of a reasonable, created spirit. This is the triumph of spirit over matter: that the spirit changes it into thousands of forms. Notice, for example, how the Spirit changes matter in the plant kingdom, how endlessly various are the forms of plants, and all of them of the same earth, the same sun, the same air, and the same water. And the bodies of animals, how varied they are! Thus the nature of matter is mutability; under such conditions was the world created in all its variety. Glory to the only eternally unchangeable God, the All-powerful Creator! Had matter been unchangeable, then God would not have been All-powerful. Glory to the spiritual nature! May it ever conquer material nature! Ask God to give you constancy in all that is good.

* * *

Why do we always remember being offended by others, why are we angry with them, while the most wicked, most hurtful and continual offenses of the devil we forget very soon, even though he offends us a thousand times a day? Why do we remember the evil done to us by others, even longer than a day? This is the delusion of the devil! The devil is very adept at deceiving us—while attacking us, he conceals himself behind our self-love, as though wishing to gratify us by the movement of some passion. However, afterward he always destroys, and we reap nothing but grief for our foolish, unreasonable self-love. He always magnifies the offenses of

other people committed against us a hundredfold, representing them in a false light. Here again he hides behind our self-love, as though he were anxious for our welfare, which other people are supposedly seeking to destroy.

* * *

Two forces, completely opposite to each other, influence me—a good power and an evil power, a life-giving power and a death-dealing power. Both are invisible, since both are spiritual. The good power, through my free and sincere prayer, always drives away the evil power, which is strong only through the evil concealed within me. To avoid being subjected to the continual harassment of the evil spirit, we must constantly have the Jesus Prayer in our hearts: "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me!" Against the invisible one (the devil) stands the Invisible God, against the strong man, the Omnipotent.

* * *

If people—weak, short-lived, mortal creatures—do so many great and wonderful works through the power and talents given them by God; if sometimes many millions of people obey the word of one man, what will the Author of all human life *not* do? Who can withstand His word? Remember the words of the centurion: "*For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it*" (Luke 7:8). Furthermore, if many animals are gifted with skills to do various wonderful things which cannot even be done by a man, animals that we trample underfoot as insignificant and weak, then what cannot be done by the Creator of all, Who has bountifully gifted all with skills, capabilities, and powers? If the soulless plants, "*which today [are], and tomorrow [are] thrown into the oven*" (Matt 6:30), are formed by His word into such delicate and beautiful shapes; if every substance we see is obedient to His word, changing into immeasurably endless variety at His commands (by means of the five elements alone), who then, seeing all this, will require a greater proof of His omnipotence? How marvelous are Thy works, O Lord! At each step and at every moment of life! Heaven and earth are full of the glory of Your wisdom, the glory of Your mercy, the glory of

Your omnipotence! You are not only the most wise Creator, and constantly reveal Yourself as such, but You also give the power of creation to Your own creatures, so that, by Your word and through the abilities You gave them, they can create amazing and valuable things. O, in what majesty have You clothed Yourself! We have abased ourselves and our nature through sin, but how dear and great we are in the sight of God! For our sake, for our salvation, He did not spare even His own Son, but clothed Him with our flesh, gave Him our very nature. He has prepared for us an everlasting kingdom from the creation of the world, and our conversion gives joy even to angels, who are good by nature. But what do we do? We do not even want to hear about it, and more and more we abase and destroy our souls through various passions and worldly attachments. It is sad, inexpressibly sad, to look at man—a creature created in God's image—and sad especially to look at Christians, found worthy of such a high calling, so greatly esteemed and gifted by God.

Forced prayer results in affectation, renders a person incapable of any occupation requiring thought, and makes him slothful in everything, even in fulfilling his duties. This should persuade all who pray in this manner to correct their way of praying. We must pray gladly, with energy, from the whole heart. Do not pray to God only when you are obliged to, either in sorrow or in need, for "*God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Cor 9:7).

* * *

In all the temples of the bodies of pious Christians, which are not made with human hands, there is a spiritual light—the soul. This light comes from God, the spiritual Sun, Who is visible in the world in the same way as the soul is evident in the body. I can see how God, the spiritual Sun, enters and shines in my soul, for then I feel joyful, warm, and bright, but when He departs from me, He leaves the soul in darkness and suffering. In material nature darkness is caused by the setting of the sun, and in spiritual nature darkness is caused by the departure of the spiritual Sun from the soul, and by its being overwhelmed with the darkness of the accursed one. In material nature there is always a remainder of light after sunset, because of the size of the sun, and in the soul there is also a remainder of light, even after the departure of the noetic Sun, because of His omnipresence and the relative weakness of the prince of darkness, who, without God's permission, is

unable to completely darken the soul. But we must also be careful, as the Lord said, "*lest darkness overtake you*" (John 12:35) completely.

When you recover from any illness, thank God with the following short prayer: Glory to You, O Lord, Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of the everlasting Father, Who alone are able to heal all manner of sickness and disease in men, that You have had mercy upon me, a sinner, and have delivered me from my sickness, not allowing it to develop and slay me according to my sins. Grant to me, from this time forth, O Master, strength to firmly fulfill Thy will, for the salvation of my accursed soul, and for Your glory, and that of Your everlasting Father, and Your consubstantial Spirit, both now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

What is a pure heart? It is meek, humble, guileless, simple, trusting, true, unsuspicious, gentle, good, not covetous, not envious, not adulterous.

* * *

My soul! Remember your heavenly dignity and do not be disturbed by corruptible, worthless things. Honor also the heavenly dignity of other people, and do not dare offend or hate them because of some perishable object. Love with all your might that which is spiritual and heavenly, and despise that which is material, earthly. Remember the words of your Saviour: "Give us this day our daily bread"—only *this day*. The highest Christian wisdom lies concealed in these words. Remember also that the Lord Himself never rushed around worrying about what He would eat, remaining content with voluntary offerings only: "*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work*" (John 4:34).

Do you hate your enemy? You are a fool. Why? Because at the same time as your enemy is persecuting you, you are actually persecuting yourself; after all, is it not persecution, and the most cruel persecution, to torture yourself with hatred for your enemy? Love your enemy, and you will be wise. O, if only you knew what a triumph, what blessedness it is to love your enemy, and to do good to him! This is what the Son of God did, and God in Trinity triumphed, and still triumphs, through His love over the ungrateful and evil-natured human race. Thus also did God's saints triumph over their enemies by loving them and doing good to them. "*While we were*

still sinners, Christ died for us…. For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom 5:8, 10).

Do not despair when fighting against the invisible enemy, but even in the midst of your sorrow and affliction praise the Lord Who has found you worthy to suffer for Him by struggling against the subtlety of the serpent, and to be wounded for Him at every hour. Had you not lived piously and endeavored to become united to God, the enemy would not have attacked and tormented you.

* * *

Glory to You, Saviour, Almighty Power! Glory to You, Saviour, Omnipresent Power! Glory to You, Abyss of Compassion! Glory to You, Whose ears are ever ready to attend to my prayers, accursed though I am, to have mercy upon me, and to save me from my sins! Glory to You, Whose All-seeing Eyes look lovingly on me and see all my secrets! Glory to You, Glory to You, Glory to You, sweetest Jesus, my Saviour!

* * *

Heartfelt faith is indispensable for man, because the light of our intellect is very limited and cannot contain much spiritual light, while the Lord our God is infinite light, and the world is an abyss of His omnipotence and wisdom. In us, however, there is only, so to speak, a drop of His power and wisdom, because our perishable flesh can only contain this much, and no more.

* * *

The Earth is hard and sluggish, though it revolves very fast round the sun; water is liquid and moves quickly, therefore people say a current is strong; air is still more fine, rarefied and faster, and therefore it moves very quickly, like wind, for example. Light is still more ethereal, moves faster, in one second traveling over incredibly great distances. If light is so ethereal and traverses such immense spaces in the shortest possible time, then what must the created spirit be, and how ethereal and fast must it be! Finally, what must the uncreated Spirit, the Lord Himself, be! How immeasurable

must He be! If light in one second moves with such terrifying rapidity, then how rapidly must the uncreated Light—the Source of all light and of everything created—move in intelligent, created spirits! Finally, how must the Light Who created everything embrace all His creatures, all the multitudes of worlds! Glory to You, Light immaterial and uncreated, "*which gives light to every man coming into the world*" (John 1:9).

Most people bear the heaviness of Satan willingly in their hearts, but they have become so accustomed to it that they often do not feel it, and sometimes they even exacerbate it without realizing it. Sometimes, however, the evil enemy increases his burden tenfold, and then they become terribly despondent and fainthearted; they complain and blaspheme God's name. The usual methods that people of our time use to drive away their sorrow are parties, cards, dancing, and theaters. But these entertainments only increase the anguish and weariness of their hearts. If they fortuitously turn to God, then the heaviness falls away from their hearts, and only then do they clearly see the heaviest burden that was previously lying on their heart, though they did not feel it. O, how many people have "*forsaken [God], the fountain of living waters, And hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no [living] water*" (Jer 2:13). There are many such broken cisterns—nearly everybody has his own. The broken cisterns are our hearts, our passions.

When you see faults and passions in your neighbor, pray for him; pray for everybody, even for your enemy. If you see that your brother is proud, stubborn, and behaves arrogantly either to yourself or others, pray for God to enlighten his mind and warm his heart with the fire of His grace, and say the following: Lord, teach meekness and humility to Your servant who has fallen into satanic pride, and drive from his heart the darkness and burden of the evil one's arrogance. If you see an angry person, pray thus: Lord, make Your servant gentle through Your grace. If you see an avaricious and greedy person, pray thus: Lord, You Who are our incorruptible Treasury and inexhaustible Riches, grant that Your servant, created according to Your image, may recognize the deceitfulness of riches, and that, like all earthly things, they are vain, fleeting, delusive. For the days of men are like grass, or like the spider's web, and You alone are our riches, peace, and joy. If you see an envious person, pray thus: Lord, enlighten the mind and the heart of Your servant, that he may recognize the great, innumerable, and priceless gifts he has received through Your boundless generosity, for in the

blindness of his passion he has forgotten You and Your rich gifts, and although enriched with Your benefits, he reckons himself poor and envies the blessings that You, O our unspeakable Benefactor, hast given to each of Your servants, not according to their merits, but according to Your will. Take away, Most Gracious Master, the devil's veil from the eyes of the heart of Your servant; grant him contrition of heart, tears of repentance and gratitude, so that the enemy who has ensnared him will not rejoice over him and may not seize him out of Your hands. If you see a drunken man, say in your heart: Lord, have mercy on Your servant, deluded by desires of his stomach and carnal pleasure. Help him understand the sweetness of temperance and fasting and the fruit of the spirit that they produce. When you see a person passionately fond of eating, and finding all his happiness in this alone, say: Lord, our sweetest Food that never perishes, but remains forever unto life eternal! Purify Your servant from the filthiness of gluttony, since he has become all flesh and estranged himself from Your Spirit. Grant that he may know the sweetness of Your life-giving, spiritual food, Your Flesh and Blood, and Your holy, living, and acting Word. In this or in a similar manner pray for all who sin, and do not dare to despise anyone for his sin. Do not be vindictive, since through this you will only aggravate the wounds of sinners; instead, correct them with any advice, warning, or chastisement that might help to stop or restrain the evil to the limits of moderation.

* * *

There are two antagonistic forces battling over our hearts. The first violently attacks the other, forcibly and cunningly invading our heart, always killing it. The second is chastely offended with, and quietly withdraws from, the slightest impurity, and its action consoles, delights, enlivens, and gives joy to our hearts. From the actions of these two antagonistic forces, it is easy to be convinced that the devil, the constant destroyer of men, and Christ, the constant Giver of Life and Saviour, both exist. One is darkness and death; the other, Light and Life. Therefore, you who love God, if you sometimes notice in your mind and heart extreme darkness, affliction, and grief, contraction and unbelief as a force strongly opposing faith in God, then know that a diabolical power, hostile to Christ, is within you. This dark and destroying power, having stolen into your heart

through some kind of sin, often prevents your calling on Christ and the saints, hiding them from you behind the darkness of unbelief. For what reason? In order to torment us, because faith saves us from his snares. But by doing so, the demonic power only proves the existence of the opposing sovereign power of Christ God, which it tries to block through the abomination of unbelief. The power of God alone can vanquish, through faith, the evil power and keep it "*reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day*" (Jude 1:6). Therefore, it is necessary to make every effort to call upon Christ the Saviour with perfect faith. It is indispensable for every Christian to acquire the habit of turning quickly to God in prayer about everything, since we are weak, and He is the source of all power and goodness. "*In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God*" (Phil 4:6). "*In everything give thanks*" (1 Thess 5:18), joining your thanksgiving to praises, following the example of the angels, who ever cry out, Alleluia!

The greatest gift of God, which we need most of all, and which we often obtain from God as a result of our prayers, is peace or consolation of heart. As the Lord Himself says, "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matt 11:28). Therefore, having obtained this rest, rejoice, and consider yourself rich, having everything you need.

Let everybody remember constantly that he is God's, body and soul, and that he depends on God for all his spiritual and bodily needs, every minute of his life. Therefore, let him turn to God whenever he feels any kind of need (physical or spiritual). For example, when he is oppressed in body or soul—that is, when he is afflicted by sorrows (spiritual sickness) or by passions (bodily sickness), when he is threatened by natural disasters (of fire, water, air, storm), when he is about to undertake anything, let him remember the Maker, Who created everything from nothing, and Who has given His creatures various abilities to accomplish all manner of works.

* * *

Every good thought presupposes the existence within us of a good, exalted principle that instructs our soul in holiness. This is evident, because it seems as through everything good were somehow hidden from us, that we uselessly try to force into our heart that which was its former inheritance.

How true are the words of the Apostle: *"And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"* (1 Cor 4:7).

We notice in ourselves the struggle between faith and unbelief, between the forces of good and evil. In the world, we see the struggle between the spirit of the Church and the spirit of the world. Through the spirit, you can distinguish two clearly opposing sides—the side of light and the side of darkness; of good and evil; the spirit of the Church and of religion and the spirit of worldliness and unbelief. Do you know why this is so? This is the result of the struggle between two antagonistic forces: the power of God and the power of the devil. The Lord works in the sons who are obedient to Him, and the devil in the sons of disobedience ("*the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience*" [Eph 2:2]). And I, too, often feel within me the struggle of the same two antagonistic forces. When I stand up to pray, the evil force sometimes painfully oppresses and weighs down my heart, so that it cannot rise up to God.

The more effective and powerful are the means that unite us to God (prayer and repentance), the more God's and man's adversary attacks us, making use of every possible weapon at his disposal: our body, inclined to laziness; our soul's weakness; its attachment to earthly goods and cares; doubt, so near to everyone; weak faith, unbelief; impure, evil, and blasphemous thoughts; heaviness of the heart and darkening of the mind. In the inattentive person, every one of these attacks is directed only for one purpose—to make him stumble in prayer, that ladder that leads us directly to God. This is the reason why so few pray sincerely and from the heart; this is the reason why Christians so very seldom prepare for Holy Communion, so seldom confess and receive the sacrament. Perhaps more than half of them would never commune it all, were it not for the civil law mandating communion once a year.[6] Those who have experienced this know it to be so.

* * *

Our strength, our soul, is invisible; the soul of animals is also invisible; in plants also, their life force is invisible. The whole material world exists and is moved by an invisible power (the laws of nature). In the heavenly mansions, there are the heavenly powers, pure and free from everything

material. Everything heavenly and earthly, the highest and the lowest, lead up to a single Almighty Power, which has produced every power in heaven and on earth. Thus, let every power praise the Only Power in Three Persons —the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. And let all earth-born creatures praise Him, especially through the all-binding power of love, everywhere dispersing life and blessedness.

* * *

For a long time, I did not clearly understand how necessary it is for our soul to be strengthened by the Holy Spirit. But now the most merciful Lord has granted me to know how indispensable it is. Yes, it is necessary every moment of our life, just as breathing is; it is necessary during prayer and throughout the whole of our life. Unless He strengthens our soul, it is constantly inclined to every sin, and, therefore, to spiritual death. It becomes weak and loses all its strength through the evil that enters into the heart, and it becomes incapable doing of any good. Without the strengthening of the Holy Spirit, one feels how the heart is inundated by various evils, ready to sink at any moment into the abyss. At such moments, our heart must stand firm as a rock. And this rock is the Holy Spirit. He strengthens our powers, and when a person prays, He strengthens his heart with faith and the hope of receiving that which he prays for. He inflames the soul with love for God; He fills the soul with bright, good thoughts, strengthening the mind and heart. If a person has any work to accomplish, He strengthens his heart with the conviction of the importance and the necessity of his labor, and with an invincible patience that overcomes all difficulties. He inspires in the person, in his relations with people of various positions and both sexes, a respect for the human person who is made in God's image—whoever the person may be—and is redeemed by the Blood of Christ the Lord. He helps him disregard the sometimes-unsightly outer appearance of another person's body and dress, his roughness of speech and manners. It is the Holy Spirit who unites us all through love, as the children of the same Heavenly Father, and in Jesus Christ teaches us to pray, "Our Father, Who art in Heaven …."

* * *

Imagine that you see the unapproachable Light from which the light of the sun, the moon, and the stars proceed, that you see the infinite Love Who sent into the world His Only-begotten Son to save the world (John 3:16, 17) from eternal torment, that you see the Primeval Beauty from which are derived all the variety and beauty in the world (plants, stones, shellfish, fish, birds, beasts, and all human beauty). Imagine that you see the Creator of heaven and earth, loving, resplendent with the unapproachable light of His perfections. What will you then feel? But this vision is exactly what the Christian faith prepares us all for! Observe the plants: in them are evident (1) the wise Mind that reveals Himself in every part of the plant (2) the enlivening Power, strengthening and maintaining every part of the plant in its proper condition (3) the omnipotence, through which limitless Wisdom changes the aspect of formless matter so easily, making it serve His limitless intentions and purposes. "*But Thou art the Most High for evermore, O Lord*" (Psalm 91:9). "*Thy knowledge is too wonderful for me*" (Psalm 138:6).

In the same way as objects situated at a great distance, though they may be large, are quite invisible from afar if the sun is not reflected by them, but even small objects are visible a long way off if the sun is reflected by them, people in whom the Eternal Sun of Righteousness, God, is not reflected in His perfections, are only noticeable when quite close, and even then only by a few. But if the Sun of Righteousness is reflected in them, then they are seen by all from a very great distance, they are glorified by all. Such people are for all places and all times (the saints); some of them shine like the sun, others like the moon, and others like the stars.

* * *

Gazing at God's creatures and seeing their infinite variety, I see myself exalted above all their multitudes through the likeness and image of God in me, through my reason and freedom, my ability to examine all of them with my mind and to wonder at the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, manifested in them. O, how I should reverence my Creator! O, how I should honor the authors of my being—my father and my mother! They gave me existence in time, for time, and for eternity. They led me, according to the will of God, Who created me in my mother's womb, into

the bridal chamber of the world, so that in due time the Creator may admit me into the bridal chamber of heaven.

* * *

The state or any society is a body. In the human body, God has put all the members together, each one in their proper place. In the same way, in the social body, God has placed each person in his proper place, the deeds of each one being the reason for his particular placement.

* * *

Everyone can see that light comes down to the earth from the sky, because the sun, the moon, and the stars light us from the celestial spheres. This indicates to us that the uncreated noetic Light, the Lord our God, resides principally in the heavens, and from Him every light descends upon us, both material and spiritual—the light of the mind and the heart. "*That was the true light which gives light to every man coming into the world*" (John 1:9). "*God is love*" (1 John 4:16). All thoughts, feelings, every disposition of the heart tending to destroy love and create enmity proceed from the devil. Let this be engraved in your heart, and hold fast in every way to love. "*Pursue love*" (1 Cor 14:1). Bear in mind: that which is in opposition to the old carnal, sinful man, that you must do; go all your life against his will. This is the object of your life, and also your glory in Jesus Christ. "*And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*" (Gal 5:24). Establish in your heart the following truth: one thing alone is worthy of all our hatred—sin. For people, on the other hand, foster only love. The most important law is simple: "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (Matt 22:39).

When your heart is overwhelmed with despondency and melancholy during prayer, be assured that these proceed from the devil who uses all of his weapons to hinder your prayer. Be firm, take courage, and with the remembrance of God drive away these deadly feelings. Observe: if not in your thoughts, then in your heart, the enemy often tries to blaspheme the name of Almighty God. What constitutes blasphemy of the heart against God? Doubt, unbelief, despondency, impatience during God's chastisement, complaining, and all the passions. Through lack of faith in God's truth and mercy, the enemy spews forth blasphemy against the truth, mercy, and

omnipotence of God; through despondency, he blasphemes God's goodness; in general, through the outbursts of human passions, he blasphemes God's all-merciful Providence and truth.

* * *

Establish in your mind and heart the following truth: the invisible plays the primary role in the whole world, in every being. When the invisible leaves a creature, it loses life and is destroyed, so that the visible in beings, without the invisible, is no more than a pile of earth. I, and all people, am animated by an invisible principle.

* * *

Men are enveloped in the darkness of ignorance of God, of themselves, and of the enemies of their salvation, who can therefore easily rob the spiritual house of our soul—its spiritual wealth.

* * *

When it is said to the inner man: "*Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead*" (Eph 5:14), what is meant here is the sleep of the soul, very similar to ordinary bodily sleep. The same is true of the phrase "My heart, awake; why sleepest thou?" This is literal "sleep," not a metaphor for sleep. When the body sleeps, it is weakened in every part and becomes insensible; in the same way the soul, sleeping the sleep of sin, becomes weakened in its powers and insensible to everything concerning faith, hope, and love. For example, tell it that the Son of God came down to earth for it and became man to save it from everlasting death; speak to it of His saving teaching, His miracles, His suffering, His death on the cross, His Resurrection, Ascension, and His second coming, but it cannot understand all this. It is unable to feel God's benefits, for it is asleep, perfectly asleep, to faith, hope, and love. It does not fear the righteous Judge, future torments, the worm that never rests, the unquenchable fire. It sleeps. It neither hears, nor sees, nor feels. It is remarkable that bodily sleep begins with the heart; first of all, the heart falls asleep, then afterward the body. The sleeper's eyes are closed and do not see, neither do his ears hear. It is the same with the soul that sleeps the sleep of sin. But the soul should always see through the eyes of

the heart, even during sleep, as it is written: "*I sleep, but my heart is awake*" (Song 5:2).

You cannot have failed to notice that all our strength lies in the heart. When the heart is light, the whole man feels at ease and joyful, but when the heart is heavy, he feels wretched. This relief you can only find in faith, especially in the Church, the place of faith *par excellence*; here God touches your hearts through His cleansing grace and gives you His easy yoke to bear. This is a great secret, which everyone should know. When the heart is light, the man is ready to run and leap. This is why "*David and all Israel played music before God with all their might*" (1 Chr 13:8; 2).

When you are slandered and become upset and sick at heart, it shows that pride is in you, and that it must be wounded and driven out through outward dishonor. Therefore, do not be irritated by ridicule, and do not hate those who hate you and slander you, but love them as your physicians, whom God has sent you to instruct you and to teach you humility, and pray to God for them. "*Love your enemies, bless those who curse you*" (Matt 5:44). Say to yourself: it is not me that they slander, but my evil passions; not me that they strike, but that viper which nests in my heart and flares up in pain when anybody speaks ill of it. I will comfort myself with the thought that, perhaps, these good people will drive it from my heart with their biting words, and my heart will then cease to ache. Therefore, thank God for outward dishonor; those who endure dishonor here will not be subjected to it in the next world. "*For she has received from the Lord's hand Double for all her sins*" (Isa 40:2). "*Lord, You will establish peace for us, For You have also done all our works in us*" (Isa 26:12).

When you pray for the forgiveness of your sins, strengthen yourself always with faith and trust in God's mercy, which is ever ready to forgive our sins after sincere prayer. Be attentive to prevent despair's entry to the heart—despair that declares itself by deep despondency and forced tears. What are your sins (no matter how bad they may be) compared to God's mercy, if only you truly repent? But often when a person prays, he does not, in his heart, inwardly hope that his sins will be forgiven, considering them to be beyond God's mercy. Therefore, he certainly will not obtain forgiveness, even if he sheds fountains of involuntary tears. With a sorrowful, constrained heart he will depart from the Gracious God, which is only what he deserves. "*Believe that you receive them,*" says the Lord, "*and*

you will have them" (Mark 11:24). To doubt that you will receive what you ask of God is to blaspheme against God.

When you don't believe in something true and sacred, your mind usually becomes dark, and your unbelieving heart constricts with fear. On the other hand when you have sincere faith, your heart experiences joy, tranquility, expansiveness, and an increase of life within it, so that the mind also becomes bright and far seeing. Is it not evident that truth triumphs over the heart's madness? Is the heart not obviously deceitful? Yes, the suffering of the heart, as a result of unbelief in anything true and sacred, is a sign of the truth of that in which it does not believe. The heart itself dies when it calls the truth into question, attempting to destroy that which cannot be destroyed, while the increase in the life of the heart, when it sincerely believes, is also a true sign of the truth of that in which it believes, because the object in which we believe communicates life to our heart, and renews and strengthens this life. Our heart, corrupted by sin, is a worthless receptacle of life, for sin is death, not life, and the fullness of life is outside us. But since this spiritual life is invisible and communicated to us according to our faith in the invisible, personal life in God, our living, sincere faith in God brings life into our heart. Without faith, the heart must naturally feel oppression and sorrow as the result of the cutting off, the diminution of life. But, in addition to faith, there must also be harmony between our spiritual activity and the object of our faith, for man is a moral being.

* * *

"*For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*" (Rom 8:6). Who will not agree with these words of the Apostle? The carnal mind is indeed death. Draw nigh, you avaricious, covetous, envious, selfish, proud, ambitious man, and let us look at you, at your actions and your life! Disclose to us, if you want, the thoughts of your heart! We shall be convinced by you—a living example—that the carnal mind is death. You do not live the true life; you are spiritually dead; though free, you are inwardly bound; though reasonable, you are as one mad, because "*the light that is in you is darkness*" (Matt 6:23). You have received from God a heart capable of delighting in everything true, holy, good, and beautiful, but your carnal mind has stifled all the heart's noble feelings, all

noble impulses. You have become a corpse; "*you have no life in you*" (John 6:53). But "to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Let any Christian person, leading the life of faith, destroying the passions within him, and thinking "*whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there is any virtue and if there is any praiseworthy*" (Phil 4:8), come to us. Tell us what you feel in your soul from this spiritual mind-set. You will tell us, "*for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Rom 14:17), my heart increases with love. I feel an abundance of life. I mock everything carnal; I wonder how it can have such a great power over the hearts of men, and I give myself up to the continual contemplation of the heavenly, spiritual, invisible blessings prepared for those who love God.

Alas! Many are led astray by the gift of freedom, given by God to men, and by the possibility of choosing between good and evil. After having fallen into sin, people are more easily inclined to evil than to good. They blame the Creator, saying, Why did God create us thus? Why did He not create us so that we would not fall and do evil? Others ascribe the corruption of man through sin to natural imperfection, passing over God in their thoughts, and considering the whole world, with all its phenomena and organisms, as some sort of impersonal, dependent, restricted entity, of which they themselves are a part. This is what estrangement from the Church does! Into what madness have you sophists fallen! Meanwhile, our children know clearly, exactly, and firmly that which you do not know. You blame the Creator; but is He to blame if you yourself, through inattention to His voice, through your own evil nature and ingratitude, have abused the greatest gift of His goodness, wisdom, and omnipotence—I mean the gift of freedom, which is an inalienable feature of God's image? Should He not be acknowledged the more merciful for having granted this gift to men, despite the ingratitude of those who receive it, so that His goodness might shine upon all brighter than the sun? And has He not indeed proven His boundless love and infinite wisdom in bestowing upon us the gift of freedom, when, after our fall into sin, after our estrangement from Him, after our spiritual ruin, He sent into the world His Only-begotten Son "*into an image made like corruptible man*" (Rom 1:23), and gave Him to suffer and die for us? Who, after this, will blame the Creator for having given us freedom? "*Let*

God be true but every man a liar" (Rom 3:4). Work out your own salvation, each one of you, struggle, and be victorious, but do not be puffed up in your mind and do not accuse the Creator of being unmerciful and unwise. Do not blaspheme the all-merciful God. Raise yourself through love; ascend higher and higher, step by step, to spiritual perfection, which is impossible to obtain without freedom. "*Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect*" (Matt 5:48).

* * *

During all our lifetime, a war is waged in our body between the principles of life and death, good and evil, sickness and health. The principle of death, being for a long time conquered by the principle of life (vitality), at last overpowers the principle of life, because our body, being elemental and sinful, does not contain an inherent principle of life, but borrows it from the soul, which, through sin, also bears in itself many of the signs of death and is too weak to be able to resist the mortality existing in the soul itself. Moreover, the inner man is renewed by the death of the outer man. The vigilant, ever-active spirit, by the exertion of its activity, finally destroys the weak, frail body. Moreover, hereditary bodily diseases in the course of time increase more and more and also destroy the body. Thus the life of man on earth is a gradual, daily dying. And our passions? How much of our health do they steal away! What about intemperance, excessive eating, drinking, sleeping, and pleasures? How all these debilitate the body! Therefore, if our body is continually afflicted and visibly approaches its end, let us despise it as transient, and let us dedicate all our strength to the immortal soul. The body is a faithless, fleeting friend.

* * *

We possess an accurate barometer that shows the rise and fall of our spiritual life—our heart. It may also be called a compass that guides us in our voyage over the sea of this life. It shows us where we are going—to the spiritual east, to Christ, or to the spiritual west, the dark power that has the power of death—the devil. Only watch this compass attentively; it will not deceive you and will show you the true way. "*If our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God*" (1 John 3:21)—that is, we are drawing nigh to the East.

* * *

That which a man loves, to which he inclines, that he will find. If he loves the worldly, he will find the worldly, and it will settle in his heart, making him earthly and binding him. If he loves the heavenly, he will find the heavenly, and it will settle in his heart and give him life. We must not set our hearts on anything earthly, for the spirit of evil is assimilated into all earthly things when we use them immoderately and excessively, this evil spirit having become earthly by endless opposition to God.

* * *

When God is present in all of a person's thoughts, desires, intentions, words, and works, it means that the Kingdom of God has come to him. Then he sees God in everything—in the world of thought, in the world of action, and in the material world. Then the omnipresence of God is most clearly revealed to him, and a genuine fear of God dwells in his heart. He seeks every moment to please God, and He is careful, every moment, not to sin against God, Who is present at his right hand. "Thy kingdom come!"

* * *

Examine yourself more; where are the eyes of your heart directed? Are they turned toward God and the life to come, toward the most peaceful, blessed, resplendent, heavenly, holy powers dwelling in heaven? Or are they turned toward the world, toward earthly blessings—to food, drink, dress, house, to sinful men and their vain occupations? If only the eyes of our heart were always fixed upon God! But it is only in need or misfortune that we turn our eyes to the Lord, while in times of prosperity our eyes are turned toward the world and its vain works. But what, you might ask, will this looking at God bring me? It will bring the deepest peace and tranquility to your heart, light to your mind, holy zeal to your will, and deliverance from the snares of the enemy. "Mine eyes are ever looking unto the Lord," said David, and gave the reason for it: "*for He shall pluck my feet out of the net*" (Psalm 24:15). "*For He shall speak peace unto His people and to His saints, and to them that turn their hearts unto Him*" (Psalm 84:9).

When you doubt the veracity of any person or event described in Holy Scripture, remember that "*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God*" (2

Tim 3:16), as the Apostle says, and is therefore true, and does not contain any imaginary persons, fables, and tales, although it includes parables which everyone can see are not actual narratives, but are written in figurative language. The whole of the Word of God is single, entire, indivisible truth; and if you admit that any narrative, sentence, or word is untrue, then you sin against the truth of the whole of Holy Scripture, and the Original Truth, Who is God Himself. "*I am the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6), said the Lord. "*Your word is truth*" (John 17:17), said Jesus Christ to God the Father. Thus, consider the whole of Holy Scripture as truth; everything that is said in it has either taken place or is taking place.

* * *

Do not give way to dark, angry inclinations in your heart against your neighbor, but conquer them and uproot them by the power of faith, by the light of a sound mind, and you will become kindhearted. "*For I have walked innocently*" (Psalm 25:1). Such inclinations frequently arise in the depths of the heart. He who has not learned to subdue them will be often gloomy, melancholy, a burden to himself and others. When they come to you, force yourself to be cordially disposed, to be joyful, to enjoy innocent jokes, and the evil inclinations will be dispersed like smoke. This is from experience.

What a strange, wild phenomenon in our nature, corrupted by sin, it is to hate those to whom we do good, and to make them pay for our benefits by disliking them! Oh, how narrow and deficient in love and mercy is our heart! How selfish it is! The enemy mocks us greatly; he wishes to destroy the fruits of our good works. But the more good you do to others, the more you should love them, knowing that those who receive your benefits serve as a pledge of God's mercy to you.

* * *

When asking anything of the Lord, or of His most-pure Mother, or of the angels and saints, one must have the faith of the centurion of Capernaum (Luke 7:6 and following verses). He believed that since his soldiers obeyed him and fulfilled his words, his request could not fail to be accomplished by the Almighty Word of the All-merciful God. If creatures, with their limited strength, do that which He asked them to do, will not the Master Himself,

through His Almighty Power, answer the requests of His servants who turn to Him with faith and hope? Will not the most-pure Mother of God, the angels, the saints, His true servants mighty through grace and in intercession with God, also fulfill our requests, if offered with faith, hope, and love? They will indeed; and I believe, with the centurion, that if I pray as I should, and for what I should, to any saint: Grant me this, he will grant it to me; Come to my help: he will come; Do this: and he will do it. This is the simple, firm faith that we must have!

* * *

Every lying thought bears in itself the proof of its falsehood. This proof is its deadening effect on the heart, "*for to be carnally minded is death*" (Rom 8:6). Likewise, every true thought contains in itself a proof of its truth. This proof is its vivifying effect on the heart, "*but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*" (Rom 8:6), says the Apostle.

"*(Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed*" (Luke 2:35). It was thus with the Mother of the Lord in the full sense of the words. It is also thus with other good and God-fearing people—their souls also are pierced with a sword in order that the thoughts of the hearts of those who come in contact with them may be disclosed; that is, sometimes God places them in such relation with people in whose souls much hidden evil lies concealed, so that they involuntarily speak out from the abundance of the evil within them, and it flows from their lips like a foul stream. Then they begin to do deeds unworthy of the name of man, and it is only after this that others learn what these people truly are, though they were previously considered wise, learned, and honorable.

* * *

"Thy kingdom come," that is, the kingdom of life, for at present the kingdom of death continues for the most part, under the dominion of him who has the power of death—the devil. How does the kingdom of God come to a man during his present life? Through heartfelt repentance. "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!*" (Matt 3:2). Let the godless man then give up his counsels (Psalm 1:1), the avaricious his love of money, the deceiver his deceitfulness, the drunkard his drinking, the glutton

his gluttony, the dissolute his dissipation, the proud his pride, the vain his vanity, the envious his envy, the insatiable his self-indulgence, the impatient complainer his impatience and complaining, and let everyone learn the works of Christian love, especially "*to bear with the scruples of the weak*" (Rom 15:1).

Outward prayer is often performed at the expense of inward prayer, and inward at the expense of outward. In other words, when I pray with my lips or read aloud, then many words do not penetrate into the heart, and I become a hypocrite. With my lips I say one thing, but in my heart I feel another. The lips speak truth, but the disposition of the heart does not agree with the words of the prayer. But if I pray inwardly, with the heart, then, without paying attention to the enunciation of the words, I concentrate on their contents, their power, gradually accustoming my heart to the truth, and thereby entering into the same disposition of spirit in which the words of the prayer were written. In this way I accustom myself, little by little, to worship in spirit and in truth, according to the words of the Eternal Truth: "*and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24). When a man prays outwardly, aloud, then he cannot always follow all the movements of his heart, which are too quick; therefore, he is obliged to pay attention to the pronunciation of the words and to their outward form. Therefore, the prayer of many church readers who read quickly becomes completely false: with their lips they seem to pray, in appearance they are pious, but their hearts are asleep, and do not know what their lips say. This occurs because they hurry and do not meditate in their hearts on what they are saying. We must pray for them as they pray for us; we must pray that their words will penetrate into their hearts and breathe warmth into them. They pray for us in the words of holy people, and we must pray for them also.

* * *

We sin in thought, word, and deed. In order to become pure images of the Most-holy Trinity, we must strive that our thoughts, words, and deeds become holy. Thought corresponds to the Father, word to the Son, and deed to the all-accomplishing Holy Spirit. Sins of thought are not an unimportant matter for a Christian, because all that we do to please God is contained in our thought, according to St Macarius of Egypt, for the thoughts are the

beginning from which words and deeds proceed. Words are still more important, because they either benefit those who hear them or corrupt and tempt them, perverting their hearts and thoughts. Deeds, still more, because examples act more powerfully than anything else on people, inspiring them to imitation.

* * *

Your Lord is love. Love Him, and in Him all men, His children in Christ. Your Lord is fire. Do not let your heart be cold, but burn with faith and love. Your Lord is light. Do not walk in darkness or do anything in darkness of mind, without reasoning or understanding, or without faith. Your Lord is a God of mercy and generosity. Be also a source of mercy and generosity to your neighbors. If you will be such a person, you will find salvation and everlasting glory.

* * *

He who says prayers hurriedly, without understanding and feeling in the heart, being conquered by his slothful, sleepy flesh, does not serve God, but serves his own flesh, his self-love, and reviles God by his inattention and the indifference of his heart to prayer. "*God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth*" (John 4:24), not hypocritically. However slothful and weak your flesh may be, however inclined to sleep you may be, conquer yourself. Do not spare yourself for God's sake; renounce yourself; let your gift to God be perfect. Give God your heart.

* * *

"*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge*" (Psalm 18:1–3). This silent but evident declaration of the heavens concerning their creation by the Almighty has reached even us, and there is no language or dialect in which this declaration is not understood. And now, since the time of the Incarnation of the Son of God, all the glory of God, the glory of His love for mankind, as well as the glory of creation, is declared to us by the Gospel and the Holy Church; by the voices of the preachers of the Gospel; by those who celebrate the sacraments and prayers (that is, the priests, readers, and singers); by the sound of bells; not excluding even the preaching of the luminaries in the heavens. But the preaching of the living voice is more alive, more understandable, more impressive. The glory of the Lord is declared by all the earth, and by all earthly creation.

Whatever you do, either at home or at work, do not forget that all your strength, your light, and your success are Christ and His Cross. Therefore, do not fail to call upon the Lord before beginning any work, saying: Jesus, help me! Jesus, enlighten me! In this way, your heart will be supported and warmed by living faith and hope in Christ, for His is the power and glory unto ages of ages.

* * *

Take care never to forget, O Christian: never lose heartfelt faith in Him Who is your invisible life, your peace, your light, your strength, your breath —Jesus Christ. Do not believe your heart when it becomes heavy, darkened, unbelieving, and cold from excess food and drink, from worldly distractions, or when you live by the mind, not by the heart; that is, when you exercise the mind and neglect the heart, or when you enlarge and adorn the net, leaving the fisherman himself in poverty and need, for the heart, figuratively speaking, is the hunter or fisherman, while the mind is the fisherman's net.

* * *

In times of rest, ease, and pampering, the flesh comes to life with all its passions and inclinations, but in times of constraint, vexation, and weariness, the flesh is subdued with all its passions. This is why, in His wisdom and mercy, the Heavenly Father subjects our soul and body to grievous sorrows and sicknesses, and this is why we must not only patiently endure these sorrows and sicknesses, but we must rejoice in them, even more than in a state of calm, ease, and bodily health, for the spiritual condition of the person who is not subjected to spiritual afflictions or bodily sicknesses must undoubtedly be bad, especially when he is showered with earthly blessings. His heart imperceptibly gives birth to all kinds of sins and passions and exposes him to spiritual death.

* * *

Remember that the Lord is in every Christian. When your neighbor comes to you, always have great respect for him, because the Lord is in him, and He often expresses His will through him. "*For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*" (Phil 2:13). Therefore, do not begrudge your brother anything, but do unto him as unto the Lord, especially since you do not know through whom the Lord will come to visit you. Be impartial to all, be kind to all, be sincere and hospitable. Remember that sometimes God speaks even through unbelievers, or disposes their hearts toward us, as it happened in Egypt when the Lord gave Joseph favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison (Gen 39: 21).

* * *

My heart finds its peace in the exalted and the spiritual, not in the earthly and material. Grant, Lord, that I may ever meditate on the exalted, and entirely renounce earthly wisdom. My trust is in Your goodness! "*Lifted up mine eyes unto the hills; from whence will my help come?"* (Psalm 120:1).

As someone's word reveals what is in his mind and heart (the mind—invisible, lordly, and creative), and as the breath proceeds from the man through the word, revealing the mind or the thought, so the Word of God reveals to us the Father—that great, all-creating Mind—and, through the Word, the Holy Spirit, the Life-giving Spirit, Who is the power of the Most High, eternally proceeds from the Father and is revealed to men. "*The power of the Highest will overshadow you*" (Luke 1:35). Now the words of the Saviour become understandable: "*No one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him*" (Matt 11:27). In other words, only the Son reveals the Father to men, as our word reveals our thought hidden in the soul. So intimate is the union between the Father and the Son! Every Person has His particular dominion and His own, so to speak, work. Therefore, the Lord said to his disciples: "*If I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you*" (John 16:7). Glory to You, Son of God, Who have revealed to us the Mystery of the Most-holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! Your Word is truth; we live by Your Word. It is our sweetness, peace, and life; especially Your words concerning the Comforter.

Strengthen yourself with the undoubting invocation of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. He is well known to you. You call Him to descend upon the Holy Gifts so often, and He, at your prayer, unfailingly and continually transubstantiates them, and you yourself partake again and again of the fruits of His divine act.

* * *

In the potter's vessel of your heart, you must preserve with the greatest care the treasure of the Spirit, "*out of his heart will flow rivers of living water*" (John 7:38). You must watch your heart, you must be kind, you must refrain from irritability and self-love, from attachments to earthly things,

and from impure arousal of the flesh. Otherwise, the priceless treasure of the Spirit will immediately leave you, peace and joy will vanish from your heart, together with that feeling of the extraordinary, angelic, spiritual lightness of the soul soaring free. The rivers of living water, which until that moment flowed and abundantly watered the furrows of the soul, will also vanish; the soul will be filled with a strange fire, cruelly burning it from within, depriving it of peace and joy, filling it with sorrow and oppression, inciting it to irritability and blasphemy. So obvious, so sharply defined is the inner transformation of the kingdom of God into the kingdom of the enemy, the kingdom of life into the kingdom of death! The Christian sees this with his inward eyes and marvels at the truth and holiness of God. He marvels also at the watchfulness of the enemy, who ever, "*walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*" (Pet 5:8).

God the Father is life, God the Son is life, God the Holy Spirit is life. The Holy Trinity is life. Life is in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. If you reject the Father with your heart, you reject the life of your heart. If you reject the Son, you reject your life. If you reject the Holy Spirit, you reject your life. Your doubt will bear the fruit of spiritual death in your heart—sorrow and painful oppression, but God remains the God of life in three Persons. If you reject the doubt of your heart and acknowledge with your whole heart all the Three Persons as your God, as your life, then life will again enter into your heart. God worshiped in Trinity is in Himself "*Yes, and in Him Amen*" (2 Cor 1:20).

* * *

While reading or listening to holy books, give honor in your heart to those who wrote them, whether they be the image of God the Word, or God the Word Himself speaking through them. Remember always, while reading spiritual or worldly books, that man is God's image and that this image of God is in the thought, word, and spirit through which he speaks. Accustom yourself always to look at every person with deep respect as the image of God, but especially when he speaks, and above all when he speaks of God. Oh, how divine he is then! From being accustomed to men, from being acquainted with them and their everyday life, from being accustomed to the gift of speech in ourselves and in others, we set little value on this gift, we even sometimes despise it in others. Thus, the devil, through our self-love

and inattention, blasphemes the image of God in men. We must humble our hearts and subdue our proud intellect in every possible way, lest we become like the contemporaries of the prophets, who looked at them only as sweet-voiced singers, and nothing more; they did not wish to fulfill their commands; they even despised, persecuted, beat, and killed them. May we never become like those of whom it is said: "*no prophet is accepted in his own country*" (Luke 4:24). However insignificant or unimportant the person may be, honor in him the image of God, especially when he speaks with love, and, above all, when he speaks and does the works of love.

Suppose you wrote a book about the Holy Trinity and have printed a thousand copies of it, or as many as you like. In all these copies of your book, there is not only the same spirit, but also the same words, and they all have the same external appearance. It is the same with the Mystery of the Body of Christ. It is offered throughout the universe, in a countless multitude of churches. The same Trinity acts on all Christian altars; in every lamb[7] there is the one same Christ and His Spirit, like the contents of your book. Everywhere, the offering has the same form; therefore, this Most-holy Mystery is like a single, great, sacred book of the Lord's love for mankind, prepared in innumerable quantities throughout the universe in the same form and with the same spirit in it, in Whom love abounds, and Who took upon Himself the sins of the world—that is, the Spirit of Christ. Here is another similarity. There are multitudes of individual human beings upon the earth; they all have the same bodily shape, the same soul, with similar, though not identical, capabilities; and all these beings have one name—human being. All people are similar to each other and have sprung from the same origin, primarily from God the Father, the Son, and His Spirit, and afterward from their parents. This is the reason why, among other things, God's law commands us to love everyone as ourselves, because of the identity of our nature. Thus, you see many persons, and they are one by the identity of the nature of their soul and body. Likewise, the Lord, in His life-giving Mysteries—wherever they are offered—is eternally the One and indivisible Creator, "*and has made from one blood every nation of men*" (Acts 17:26). Through His one Spirit, living in the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood, celebrated in all the churches of the world, He wishes to unite us to Himself—us who have fallen from union with Him through sin and obedience to the devil—and to cut off everything that prevents our union with Him and each other and purify it, "*that they all may be one, as*

You, Father, art in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us" (John 17:21). This is the purpose of the mystery of Communion.

Why should it be incredible that the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, and that Christ abides in them as the soul lives in the body? Why should it be incredible, when the devil nests in a tiny sprout (i.e., in the heart) of a fetus, and grows stronger with the growth of the body, so that afterward the child is born with the devil already concealed and nesting in its heart? O, what infinite goodness and wisdom the Lord has shown by giving us the Most-pure Mysteries of His Body and Blood, and by the fact that they are received by Christians into their very hearts—that is, there where the devil nests, having the power of sin and "*the power of death*" (Heb 2:14)—as a perfect antidote to bestow upon us life and holiness, and to drive away sin and death! Just as it is indubitable that the devil and every sin nest in our hearts so it is also indubitable that Christ, the life-giver, our sanctification, dwells in our hearts. Our Lord is mightier than the devil. If the devil still lives and works in our hearts through our attachment to earthly things, then how shall Christ not enter into our heart through faith and repentance, since it was created to be the temple of God? How shall Christ not enter into our heart precisely in His Blood and Flesh, according to our dual nature—spirit and flesh? Also, if the devil can give life and speech to "*the image of the beast*" (Rev 13:15), then can Christ not dwell in the bread and wine, transforming them, and completely assimilating them to Himself as His Flesh and Blood?

A magnifying glass only sets fire to wood, paper, or any other combustible material when we place it in such a position that the rays of the sun, passing through the focus of the glass, are all concentrated at a single one point. Then the rays act all together, directing, as it were, the power of the entire sun onto the object, on a small scale. It is the same during prayer, when our souls are warmed, revived, and set on fire by the spiritual sun, God, when through our mind, acting like a magnifying glass, we direct this spiritual Sun at our heart, the spiritual center of our being, and when the Sun acts on our heart with all His simplicity and power. It is the same with the Mother of God, the angels, and the saints. Direct their images at your heart in their fullness, with all their power and sanctity; let your heart receive enlightenment from them with all possible intensity and power; and it will catch fire from the abundance of their love, acting on the heart like flames. Their holiness, purity, goodness, and strength will be imparted to

your heart; it will itself be cleansed, strengthened in faith and love; and the more resolutely, the more constantly your heart is turned toward God and His saints, the more it will be enlightened, purified, and vivified.

* * *

If you invoke any saint doubting that he is near you and hears you, and your heart becomes oppressed and constricted, overcome yourself, or, rather, with the help of the Lord Jesus Christ, vanquish the slanderer (the devil) nesting in your heart. Call upon the saint with the heartfelt assurance that he is near you in the Holy Spirit and hears your prayer, and you will at once feel relieved. Oppression and weariness of heart during prayer come from lack of sincerity, from the deceitfulness and craftiness of our heart, in the same manner as when, during ordinary conversation with other people, we feel inwardly ill at ease if we speak with them not from the heart, but dishonestly, insincerely. "*It is hard for you to kick against the goads*" (Acts 26:14). Be true in heart always and everywhere, and you will always and everywhere have peace, but especially be true in your conversation with God and the saints, "*because the spirit is truth*" (1 John 5:6).

When praying, we must pronounce each word from the heart with the same power that is contained in each one of them, just as medicines are ingested in the proper dosage for the optimal effectiveness determined by the Creator. If we waste the essential oils of the medicine, allowing them to dissipate, then the medicine will have no beneficial effect, but will only set our teeth on edge. Likewise, if during prayer we pronounce the words but disregard their power without feeling their truth in our heart, we shall not receive any benefit from the prayer, because true, fruitful prayer must be in spirit and in truth. The words of the prayer correspond to the constituent parts and the different ingredients of the medicine, each of them having its own effect and forming together a healing dose for the body. In the same way as pharmacists preserve the medicines by keeping them firmly stoppered in glass or other vessels, so we must firmly preserve the power of each word in our heart as in a vessel, and not pronounce it otherwise than with the power corresponding to it.

* * *

When praying, we must imagine the whole of creation as nothing before God, and God alone as everything, holding everything like a drop of water in His hand, present in all, acting in everything, and enlivening everything.

* * *

Prayer is a golden chain linking the Christian, a wanderer and stranger upon earth, with the spiritual world of which he is a member, and above all with God, the Source of life. The soul came from God, and it continually returns to God, ascending through prayer. There is great benefit from prayer to those who pray—it gives rest to the soul and body. It gives rest not only to the soul of him who prays, "*I will give you rest*" (Matt 11:28), but also to the souls of his departed forefathers, fathers, and brothers. See how important prayer is!

As smoke from burning wood rises in the air, so the soul ascends from a body given over to the burning of corruption.

* * *

Conscience in people is nothing short of the voice of the omnipresent God moving in the hearts of mankind. As the One Who Is and has created everything, the Lord knows all as He knows Himself—all the thoughts, desires, intentions, words, and works of men in the past, present, and future. No matter how far I allow my thoughts and imagination to wander, He is there before me and I inevitably finish my course in Him, ever having Him as the witness of my ways. "*For your eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men*" (Jer 32:19). "*Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?"* (Psalm 138:7).

Here before us is a living man. His eyes are fixed on us, his ears are open to hear; his soul and body are before us, but we see the body, not the soul. We do not see his thoughts, his desires, his intentions, although there is not a single instant during which his soul does not think and live a full inner life. In exactly the same way, before us, around us, and within us is visible nature, all of God's beautiful world; in it we see everywhere life, harmonious order and action, but we do not see the Author of life and order, we do not see the Great Artist Himself, although He is present at every moment in every place, as the soul in the body, though He is not limited by it. There is not even a fraction of a moment during which He, the All-

perfect, Most-wise, All-merciful, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Almighty Spirit, does not think, does not shower benefits and wisdom upon His creatures. There is not even a fraction of a moment during which He is not fully invested in the work of His wisdom and omnipotence, for God is a dynamic Being, creating in perpetuity. And so, you look at the world, but as you look, observe its Source everywhere. Observe God everywhere present, filling all things, moving in everything, and ordering everything.

* * *

The conscience of every man is a ray of light from the one all-enlightening spiritual Sun—God. Through the conscience, God rules over all as a righteous and almighty King. And how mighty is His dominion through the conscience! Nobody is strong enough to completely silence its voice! It speaks impartially to all and to each, as the voice of God Himself! Through the conscience, we are all as one man before God. This is why it seems as if the Ten Commandments referred to one man: "*I am the Lord your God … You shall have no other gods before Me … You shall not make for yourself a carved image … You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain … Remember the Sabbath day … Honor your father and your mother … You shall not murder … You shall not commit adultery … You shall not steal … You shall not bear false witness … You shall not covet*" (Exod 20:1–17), or "*you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart*" and "*your neighbor as yourself*" (Mark 12:30, 31), because "he" is exactly the same as "I."

"*Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Eph 4:3). This is a great commandment! It is absolutely necessary to fulfill it. "To keep the unity of the Spirit." This the Son of God always desired, and still desires. For this He prayed, and still prays, to His Father. "Holy Father! Keep through Thine own name," He prayed for His disciples, "*those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are…. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, … that the world may believe that You sent Me*" (John 17:11, 20, 21). You see, therefore, that our unity through the Spirit, through life, also clearly proves the Divinity of the Founder of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ. He, who wishes to unite all, to make all as one soul, and does so, came forth from the One God Who created all things, Who has

united all things under Him, and Who wishes to bring even those who have separated themselves from communion by disobedience back to union with Him through faith and obedience. Teachers who have not come from God, who were not called by Him or sent by Him (“*I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran*” (Jer 23:21). “*And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was*” [Heb 5:4]), usually bring into the company of men disunion, diversity of opinion, and thus clearly prove that they are not of God. Luther was one of these, as were other teachers of dissent, as are all heretics. They have divided the one Church of God; they have cut into parts the indivisible, the united plurality under the one Head of the Church—Christ, animated by the one Spirit of God. Therefore, they have proven that they were instruments of the devil, who strives in every way to divide, scatter, and disperse the Lord’s sheep. “*The wolf catches the sheep and scatters them*” (John 10:12). Glory to the Christian Orthodox faith! Its true fruit ever was, and is, the unity of the faithful among themselves through love and the community of spiritual and material blessings. The farther Christians remove themselves from the spirit of their faith, the more they become divided by self-love, the more they are absorbed in themselves, the less they share their spiritual and material blessings, especially material ones, with those in need. Love becomes exhausted in them, and mankind becomes more distressed. True Christianity brings joy even now to the earth, for it looks at Christians as one body, whose members are sometimes honorable, sometimes dishonorable (not by nature, but by their circumstances and actions), both strong and weak, rich and poor, and the Spirit of God intercedes in the souls of the rich and strong on behalf of the poor and needy through the community of spiritual and material blessings. “*Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul*” (Acts 4:32). (It is to Russia’s credit that, during the famine, the government gave universal support to those suffering from the bad harvest.)

Dislike, enmity, or hatred should be unknown among Christians, even those in name only. How can dislike exist among Christians? Everywhere you see love, everywhere you breathe the fragrance of love. Our God is the God of love. His kingdom is the kingdom of love. Because He loved us, He did not even spare His Only-begotten Son, but delivered Him up to die for our sakes, “to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). In your home, you see love among family members, for they are all sealed in baptism and

chrismation with the cross of love, and they wear the cross. They also partake with you in church of the *agape* feast[8] In church, everywhere we see symbols of love—crosses, the sign of the cross, saints who were pleasing to God through their love for Him and their neighbor, and Incarnate Love Himself. In heaven and earth, everywhere there is love. It rests and gives joy to the heart, as does God, while enmity kills the soul and the body. And you must show love, always and everywhere. How can you not love when everywhere you hear love preached, when only the destroyer of mankind, the devil, is eternal enmity!

"*He who did not spare His own Son … how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"* (Rom 8:32). The greatest gift has already been given; everything else that we ask or pray for is infinitely less than the Son of God Himself. We may therefore boldly ask God for everything in the name of Jesus Christ, every blessing or gift that we can think of, for "*whatsoever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son*" (John 14:13). Do you pray for the forgiveness of sins or for the repose of the souls of the departed? "*He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world*" (1 John 2:2). "*The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*" (1 John 1:7). He can forgive even the departed every sin committed by them in word, deed, or thought. "He is the resurrection, the life and the repose of His departed servants." Would you ask anything of Him for the living and for yourself? "*You will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you*" (John 15:7).

As the number of stars in heaven is known to the Lord, so the number of the angels in heaven and even the number of their thoughts are known to Him. As the number of the grains of sand in the sea, the number of creatures on the whole earth, with their organs and constituent parts, both great and infinitely small, are known to Him, as the number of atoms of all elements, small even to infinite infinity, is known to Him, so He knows the number of the entire human race, past, present, and future, as well as the number of all the thoughts of those who were, who are, and who will be, and the number of all the movements of their hearts, their words, and their deeds. As in material nature nothing is concealed from Him, not even the smallest atom (for how can that which was created by God be destroyed without Him, without His will?), in spiritual nature, not a single thought, not a single idea, not a single movement of the heart, not a single desire or

deed are hidden from Him—all are counted up in their correct number and measure, that is, in their actual quantity, degree, and power, excepting evil thoughts, desires, words, and acts confessed or expunged by an amended life. The number of all the atoms of the earth, as well as the number of thoughts and movements of the human spirit, are in this respect completely parallel. Indeed, if that which is created, subordinate, and dead is not destroyed of itself, then how can that which has itself received from God the capability of creating, directing, and living be destroyed? What I am referring to is thought becoming incarnate in words, and the very author of thought, the soul. Thus, avoiding it is impossible! Prepare yourselves, mortals, for the reckoning. You will be greeted at the judgment by all your thoughts, desires, words, for all your deeds, good and evil, which await you there, and which were sent there beforehand by you from earth—the good and the evil, unconfused or unexpunged by virtuous thoughts, desires, and deeds. For all these God will bring you to judgment. Most Merciful Lord! "*And enter not into judgment with Thy servant*" (Psalm 142:2). "*If Thou shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord; Lord, who shall stand?*" (Psalm 129:3).

The greatest luminary is reflected in infinitely small earthly bodies, in their innumerable multitudes, and man's image is reflected in the pupils of his eyes. In the same way, the spiritual Sun, Christ, is represented in small beings, in people in their infinite multitudes, also in the smallest particles of His Body and Blood, because Life Eternal is most simple and indivisible. The sun, reflected in a multitude of great and small bodies, lights the whole world, covering it all. It is the same with the Lord.

* * *

There is only one wind, but it appears and acts in a countless multitude of places. In the same way, there is but one and the same Spirit of God, but He manifests His power and strength in innumerable assemblies of angels and in all holy men He "*blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it*" (John 3:8).

"*The Lord keepeth*" not only "*all their bones*" (Psalm 33:20), but also the images of the saints, not allowing them to perish through corruption, through carelessness and neglect, but miraculously recovering them, as we know from descriptions of the appearances of miracle-working icons, especially of the Most-pure Mother of God. This is how dear the image of

man is to God, especially the image of a holy man, a vessel of grace. Through such images, He works miracles and bestows invisible powers of healing and consolation.

"*God is greater than our heart, and knows all things*" (1 John 3:20). Through the eyes of our heart, we see and know the smallest movements of the heart, all our thoughts, desires, and intentions, in almost everything that is in our soul. But God is greater than our heart. He is within us, around us, and everywhere, in every place, the Single, All-seeing, Spiritual Eye, of whose spiritual vision our own is but a pitiful image; therefore, He knows all that is in us a thousand times better and more clearly than we do ourselves At the same time, He knows everything that is in every man, in every angel, and in all the heavenly powers. In every animate and inanimate creature, He sees all the inner workings, the complete inner life as upon the palm of His hand, being immanent to all one of them, and sustaining each one of them in its existence and function, as the All-Provident Creator.

In Jesus Christ "*dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*" (Col 2:9), and it is the same in the Life-giving Sacrament of His Body and Blood. In the small human body dwells all the fullness of the infinite, uncontainable Divinity, and in the small "lamb," or bread, in each particle, dwells the fullness of the Godhead. Glory to Thy omnipotence and goodness, O Lord!

Though it is always in the heavens, the sun's rays, like innumerable hands, reach the earth and its entire surface, and it imparts its warmth to all organic bodies, entering them, warming them, giving them life and growth through its warmth, passing through transparent bodies or reflecting in them as a complete sphere (there are as many images of the sun as there are transparent bodies), warming opaque, solid, inorganic bodies. In the same way, the spiritual Sun, God, although He remains pre-eminently in the Heavens, through His Life-giving Spirit, like the sun's rays, He imparts Himself to all reasonable creatures—angels and men—penetrating into their spiritual being, sanctifying them, giving them life, strength, and growth. As the sun, though it is itself in the heavens, lights the whole earth, giving life to every creature and thing, however insignificant, so the Lord, by the light of the Trinity, enlightens all men, for He is the true Light, "*which gives light to every man coming into the world*" (John 1:9).

All you who draw near to serve God in prayer, learn to be like Him—meek, humble, and sincere in your heart. Let there be no deceitfulness, duplicity, or coldness in your soul. Strive to have His Spirit, for "*if anyone*

does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His" (Rom 8:9). The Lord seeks in us that which is like and akin to Himself, onto which His grace may be grafted. Remember that not a single word is lost during prayer if you say it from your heart; God hears each word and weighs it in a balance. Sometimes it seems to us that our words only strike the air in vain, like the voice of one crying in the wilderness. No, no, it is not so! We must remember that God understands us in prayer, if I can put it that way. In other words, He understands us in the same way as those who have perfected prayer understand themselves, for man is God's image. The Lord responds to every desire of the heart, expressed or unexpressed in words.

When I take communion with undoubting faith, I learn in a perceptible manner that Christ is omnipresent. In what way? Because in every particle of the Body and in each drop of the Blood I receive Christ wholly, and thus, through the eyes of my heart, I see that He is at the same moment wholly in all the particles and drops, whatever their number may be, even to infinity. Exactly in the same way, the Lord is wholly in every church, and since Orthodox Churches are to be found all over the known world, then the Lord is present in the whole earth, not only through His divinity, but also in His Body and Soul. Everywhere, wholly and indivisibly, He communicates Himself to believers, bringing forth sweet fruits in them—purification from sins, sanctification of Christian souls and bodies, righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, uniting all to Himself, the Father, and the Holy Spirit. We also know that through fervent prayer He enters into the souls of believers with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Being immanent to the whole material world, and vivifying the whole of it together and each part of it separately, the Lord is still more immanent to men, especially Christians, and He abides in them. "*Examine yourselves as to whether you are in faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified*" (2 Cor 13:5). "*Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?"* (1 Cor 6:19).

The human race is one great tree of God, spreading and growing over the whole earth, and covering the whole earth with its branches. To the original rotten root—fallen Adam—God in His great wisdom and mercy has grafted a new living root—the Lord Jesus Christ—from whom Christians derive their origin, as a branch from the whole tree. In trees there is organic life; in Christians there is the life of Christ, heavenly, spiritual, and we must regard the spiritual talents and abilities of true Christians as the work of Jesus

Christ Himself. “*But we have the mind of Christ*” (1 Cor 2:16), said the Apostle of true Christians. We must also regard good works as the fruits of the grace of Christ. Christians leading an unchristian life are the dry branches growing from the living root—Christ, and “*every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away … and throw them into the fire*” (John 15:2, 6). Pagans are not yet renewed, moribund shoots coming from a rotten root—Adam. Through faith, they also may be grafted on to the living, healthy shoot, to the body of the Church, to the Body of Christ.

Whose are the leaves of the tree? God’s. Whose are the good thoughts in you? God’s. Whose is the capacity in the trees to grow and form their tissues, to produce and develop leaves and fruit? God’s, given by God. Whose is your capacity to think and speak? God’s. Do the trees misuse the powers given to them by God? No. Do people misuse the capacities and powers bestowed upon them by God? They do. They misuse them through their mind, received from God for the purpose of knowing God and His truths; they misuse them through their heart, created for the purpose of loving God and neighbor, of experiencing the blessedness of communion with God; and they misuse them through free will, given to them for the purpose of endless improvement in virtue.

* * *

God acts in our body and in its natural functions, supporting it, feeding it, and developing it. He also acts in the grass, the trees, the animals—clothing the grass (Luke 12:28), raising the tree and adorning it with leaves and fruit, feeding the animals and growing their bodies. Of ourselves, we cannot do or create anything in our body, not one iota, as it is said: “*you cannot make one hair white or black*” (Matt 5:36). God is present equally in the infinitely great and in the infinitely small, not being limited either by the one or the other, but is wholly present in everything, being indivisible and above all.

Could the leaves exist without the tree, and could the tree itself exist without earth, air, water, and warmth? Of course not. Likewise, no soul can exist without God, without His Son, without His Spirit. God is my being, my breath, my light, my strength, my drink, my food. He carries me as a mother carries her infant in her arms. Even more than this: carrying me, my soul, and my body, He dwells in me and is united to me.

* * *

When praying to God, remember that God is Three Persons; since He is a Person and Persons, He possesses in infinity all those perfections which we can imagine in any most perfect man, by the grace of God—as, for instance, in the most-pure Virgin Mary, in St Nicholas the Wonder-Worker, in St John Chrysostom, in the apostles, and prophets. Filled with the Spirit of God, man is God's image and the likeness of God. From a perfect image, we can at least partially judge what the Prototype is like. All that is best, everything in man that attracts the spiritual gaze and the inclinations of the heart, is from God, from His Son, and from His Spirit. For instance, St Nicholas was, and still is, compassionate and merciful to all people by the grace of God. He always was, and still is, ready to hear those who call upon him sincerely, with the same merciful heart which he had during his lifetime, and which he still possesses by the grace of God. Now, is not the Lord Himself compassionate and merciful, and much more compassionate and merciful? Infinitely more, as He Himself is infinitely greater than St Nicholas. Or let us take the Apostle Paul. What an abyss of compassion there is in the apostle! Writing of the servant Philemon, he said to his master, "*You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart*" (Phlm 1:12). How much love is contained in these words! And with what love are all his epistles filled! "*Our heart is wide open,*" he wrote to the Corinthians. "*You are not restricted by us*" (2 Cor 6:11, 12). In one of the epistles, he describes the essence of divine love. In reading this description, one feels that the apostle himself had indeed fulfilled all that he wrote concerning love. But from where did this love appear in an apostle who had previously persecuted and grieved Christ, and who, entering the houses of His disciples, dragged out men and women, bound them, and mercilessly imprisoned many (Acts 9:1, 2; 12:5; 16:10, 11)? From the Lord, the Source of love. He alone is eternal, boundless Love, embracing all creatures.

As the Holy Trinity, our God, is One Being, although in Three Persons, so likewise we ourselves should be one. As our God is indivisible, we also must be indivisible, as though we were one man, one mind, one will, one heart, one goodness, without the smallest impurity of malice. In a word, we must be one pure love, as God is love. "*That they may be one just as We are one*" (John 17:22).

* * *

All men, as well as the angels of God, are the breath of God. This is why the angels are called spirits—or, which is the same thing, the breath of God, while the spirits of men are called souls, because they proceeded from the divine breath, and breathe through God. In the first Antiphon sung at Matins (tone 4), we hear the following: "Every soul is quickened by the Holy Spirit, and by His purity is elevated." But all other creatures are also called breaths ("*Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord*" [Psalm 150:6]) because they also proceed from the Spirit of God, although they are not endued with reason and freedom. Therefore we must care for every creature, and neither abuse, nor overwork it. Blessed is the man who is merciful, even to his chattel (See 1 Cor 9:9).

* * *

God is a Spirit, a simple Being. How does the spirit manifest itself? By thought, word, and deed. Therefore God, a simple Being, is not composed of a series or of a multitude of thoughts, or of a multitude of words or action, but He is wholly in one simple thought—God, the Trinity—or in one simple word—the Trinity—or in three Persons, united together in one. But He is also wholly in everything that exists, penetrating and filling everything with Himself. For instance, when you say a prayer, He is in every word of it, and like a holy fire He penetrates each word. Everyone may experience this for himself if he will pray sincerely, fervently, with faith and love. But, especially, He is wholly in the names belonging to Him —Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or Holy Trinity, or the Lord, the Lord God, the Lord God of Sabaoth, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Holy Spirit, the Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, and in His other names. The angels and the saints are also near to us in their names, since their names and our faith in them are near to our hearts. They are nothing else but the breath of God, and are "*one spirit with Him*" (Cor 6:17).

Do the saints, to whom we pray, pray for us as well? They do. If I, a sinful man, a cold-hearted, sometimes angry, and ill-disposed man, pray for others, both for those who asked me and those who have not, and I do not doubt, do not weary of saying their names during prayer, although

sometimes not with the whole heart, then will not God's saints, those lamps and torches burning in God and before God, full of love to their earthly brethren, pray for me and for us when we call upon them with faith, hope, and love, according to our strength? They, our speedy helpers, pray also for our souls, as our divinely enlightened mother, the Holy Church, assures us. Pray, therefore, without doubt to God's saints, asking their intercession before God on your behalf. They hear you in the Holy Spirit; only pray in the Holy Spirit, from the depths of your soul, for when you pray sincerely, the Holy Spirit breathes in you. He is the Spirit of truth and sincerity; He is our truth and sincerity. The same Holy Spirit is in us and in the saints. The saints are holy through the Holy Spirit, Who sanctifies them and eternally dwells in them.

* * *

Lord! You, Whose love to us infinitely surpasses the love of every father, mother, the tenderest wife, have mercy on us!

* * *

Holy Virgin, our Lady! You, Whose love to Christians surpasses the love of every mother, of every wife, hear our prayers and save us! May we constantly remember You! May we always pray fervently to You! May we ever undoubtingly and unfailingly take refuge beneath Your holy protection!

* * *

We pray to the all-merciful and most-pure Mother of God, and She prays for us. We glorify Her Who is above all glory, and She prepares eternal glory for us. We often say to Her, "Rejoice," and She asks Her Son and God, "My beloved Son, give them everlasting joy in return for greeting Me with joy."

* * *

Believe that God sees you with the same conviction as you believe that your father, or anyone else standing face to face with you, sees you, only

with this difference: the Heavenly Father sees everything that is in you. He sees you entirely. He sees all creatures—the angels, the saints, us sinners, the animals. He sees everything at once in the same way as the sun illuminates everything at once. Then again, "*The eyes of the Lord are ten thousand times brighter than the sun*" (Sir 23:19). A vivid sense of God's presence is a source of peace and joy for the soul. Doubt in His presence produces distress, sorrow, and affliction. Heartfelt prayer is the source of peace of heart, while insincere, superficial, inattentive prayer wounds the heart.

Jesus Christ, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is an unfathomable abyss of love for mankind. In this abyss of mercy, all will find an abundance of mercy. Only turn to God with faith, hope, and pain in the heart for your sins and your offenses against the Lord, our Master and Benefactor.

* * *

God is closer to us than any man at all times. He is closer to me than my own clothes, closer than the air or light, more dear than my wife, father, mother, daughter, son, or friend. I live in Him, soul and body. I breathe in Him, think in Him, feel, consider, intend, speak, undertake, work in Him. "*For in Him we live and move and have our being*" (Acts 17:28). "*For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure*" (Phil 2:13). Therefore we must always see God before us at our right hand, we must be strong, and in order not to sin we must live in such a way that nothing will thrust God from our thoughts and hearts, that nothing will hide Him from us—no passion for food, drink, money, dress, house, furniture, or any person. Let no worldly distractions and pastimes deprive us of our sweetest, beloved Lord, but let us every hour and every minute belong to Him, and let us perpetually be with Him, as He Himself is perpetually with us, as He constantly cares for us and guards us. But when I sin, or when I cultivate any passionate attachment to anything, then He is far from me, not in terms of space, for He at all times fills all things, but in terms of my own spiritual withdrawal from Him, my own indifference to Him. At such times, He actually deprives me of His grace and of His presence in my heart, and then His enemy, the devil, dwells in me.

As in a sea, lake, or river every molecule of water is connected to other molecules and is surrounded by them, or as in the air every molecule is surrounded by other molecules and is connected to them, so all of us earth-born creatures are surrounded by God on all sides, while those of us who are pure, or being purified, are united to Him and are everywhere with Him. All of us earth-born creatures—like water, like air, like a tree with many branches—form a single whole, though often broken as a result of the envy of the enemy, through selfishness, irritability, animosity, disputes, pride, heresy and dissent, envy, avarice, unsociability, and other passions. On the other hand, the devil and his angels also form another whole, like dark, malignant, poisonous water or fiery, suffocating, deadly air. They surround us and endeavor to break into our souls when we are off our guard or under the domination of various passions, in order to darken, disturb, oppress, inflame, and in every way torment us. Thus, for instance, you may sometimes chance to be walking in the pure sweet-scented air, when suddenly a foul odor from a cesspool strikes your sense of smell unpleasantly, and you wish to pass quickly by this place, in order to breathe wholesome air again. The foulness of the devil is like this. The Lord Himself compares the dark forces of the devil to air and water. He says, "*The rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house*" (that is, upon the man, upon the human soul) "*and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock*" (Matt 7:25).

People say: Had I not looked, I should not have been tempted, had I not heard, my heart would not have been wounded, had I not tasted, I should not have desired. You see how many temptations arise from our sight, hearing, and taste! How many have suffered and still suffer because their hearts were not firm in their good intentions, because they imprudently looked with impure eyes, because they heard with ears unaccustomed to discern between good and evil, because they greedily tasted! The feelings of the sin-loving, greedy flesh, unrestrained by reason and God's commandments, have drawn them into various worldly passions, darkening their minds and hearts, depriving them of peace of heart, and taking away their free-will, making them the slaves of their senses. Thus you see how carefully one must look, listen, taste, smell, and feel; rather, how necessary it is to guard the heart so that through your outward senses, as through a window, no sin may steal in, and the author of sin himself, the devil, may

not darken and wound that heavenly fledgling, our soul, with his poisonous and deathly arrows.

* * *

The soul receives the Lord in the Life-giving Mysteries through faith and through the heart's acknowledgment that the Lord Himself is truly present in the Mysteries, and our body receives the Lord Himself through the mouth and stomach. When the soul receives the Lord with firm faith, then the Lord fills in a single moment both the soul, as a simple being, and the whole of the body, because the soul fills the entire body, and because of the all-fulfilling nature of God.

* * *

In the Christian life, temptations and tests or trials of our spiritual condition are necessary, and since our life, like the furniture of a house, becomes covered with various stains, it is necessary to clean it. In order to test the hardiness of certain objects, such as silver, instruments are required. In a similar way, in order to test the state of the soul, other people are required, like for like, who, willingly or unwillingly, intentionally or unintentionally, show us by their conduct, in a manner apparent both to ourselves and others, whether we are obedient to God's commands declared to us in the Gospel or not. Thanks to other people, we see whether we live according to the spirit, mortifying in ourselves the desires of the flesh, or according to the flesh, being obedient slaves of the will of the flesh and of carnal thoughts and passions. In this way we—recognizing that we are not living according to the will of God, not fulfilling the commandments of our Sweetest Saviour, but according to our own sinful and blind will—can quickly amend our lives and zealously follow the commandments of the divine Gospel.

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Our body lives by the elements that constitute it, constantly absorbing air, water, and other organic bodies. Our soul lives by the Divine Spirit, from Whom it has its origin, constantly absorbing, for the support of its inner life, the life of God in Trinity, through the light of the mind, good

inclinations and desires of the heart and will, and constancy in goodness. As the body, when it is not nourished by the elements natural to it, cannot live and dies, so the soul, when not nourished by prayer, good thoughts, feelings, and works, also dies. In our bodily nature the nourishment and growth of the body are satisfactorily accomplished for a time, but if accidentally, through food or drink or breathing, any poison or contagion enters the body, then the body is subjected to suffering, or even death, if help is not given in time. In the same way, in our spiritual nature everything goes on satisfactorily for a time, but if it is corrupted by the devil, then it suffers grievously, becoming as though benumbed, and it requires the heavenly Physician's speedy help, which can only be received through the prayer of faith. (The snares of the devil in the soul of a man correspond to the effect of poison on the body, with the difference that poison seldom enters our body, but the snares of the devil are always with and around us.) For the nourishment and support of the life of our body, light, air, water, and food are usually quite easy to find. In particular, air, the most necessary element for life, constantly surrounds us. Water is also easily found, as well as vegetable and animal food. The same is true also regarding the forces for sustaining the life of our soul—they are always ready in abundance. The soul's spiritual food, drink, and raiment is always available in God the Trinity. Being in every place at all times, like air or light, the Lord is ready at every moment of our life (depending on our faith and the constant prayerful disposition of our soul) to sustain our spiritual life by His ever-active grace. He is the eternal light of our mind and heart, the air with which our soul breathes, the food that nourishes and strengthens it, its life-giving warmth, and the garment with which it not only covers its sinful nakedness, but with which it also adorns itself as with royal purple, the garment of Christ's justification. Every moment of his existence, man is at once in two spheres—the material and spiritual—from which he receives his entire existence. One supports his body, the other his spirit. One is visible nature, the other the limitless Hypostatic Spirit of God, Who, being everywhere, is above all, and, containing everything, is Himself not limited by anything. Every person in and of himself is so insignificant and helpless that he receives everything necessary to support his existence not from himself, but from without. He himself is nothing. And as his body is supported by air, food, and drink, so his soul is supported by prayer, by reading God's Word, and by the communion of the Holy Mysteries. On the

other hand, since in the kingdom of the most merciful and Almighty God there is also a place for fallen evil spirits, and since their place is the very air and earth inhabited by men, and since man from the very beginning was allured by them to evil, and since they were always, still are, and will be together with the human race until the end of the world, they form, so to speak, the environment in which we live. We, who are free, though at the same time fallen, have been renewed by the Son of God and remain in this grace freely through faith, a good disposition to God, and good works. Therefore, we should continually pray to God to guard ourselves from the antagonistic forces fighting against our soul, desiring to make us their prisoners, to unite our spirit to theirs. We must be watchful to the utmost not to become like the spirits of evil through our spirit and acts, lest they become the breath of our soul instead of God, lest the evil of their nature should become our own personal evil. We must also always bear in mind that He Who is in us is greater than he "*who is in the world*" (1 John 4:4). and that the Lord constrains the demons by His power, only permitting them to act in the world as much as His goodness, mercy, and omnipotence allow, that is, to teach and correct mankind. But there are men who have the devil himself as their clothing, food, and drink, in the same way as true Christians clothe themselves in Christ and eat His Body and Blood. There is an antagonism of opposites everywhere in the world—the spirit against the flesh, good against evil. Satan uses his agents and helpers to spread his dominion among men; God sends his angels, whom He gives to every Christian to guard and guide him into Christ's blessed kingdom.

Those who do not believe in God's omnipresence in their thoughts and hearts slander the power of God, not ascribing to Him a property which even air possesses, for air is everywhere. Is not the Creator of the air everywhere? Unbelief in God's omnipresence—or, in general, any sin—actually becomes strong proof that He is everywhere present. When I do not believe, my heart is constrained, experiencing a kind of burning sensation. It is weary and tormented; my mind is darkened, and I am in a state of desolation. But when I believe with living faith that God is everywhere, present in every place, and therefore that He is ever with me and within me, my heart expands. It becomes free, light, alive, and my mind becomes clear. I am in a joyful state. Thus the very thing that destroys me becomes the most striking proof of the existence of that in which I do not believe. Unbelief torments me, because it is a lie of my own heart or of the evil

spirit against God, Who is my life. My free soul's mental denial of life itself is naturally and rightly its death. Again, God is a reasoning Being, and my soul is also a reasoning being, derived from the Former. Therefore, my communion with God takes place through thought, through faith of the heart, which is nothing else but the vivid, clear understanding that God is in every place. When I have no such thought, it signifies that I have the opposite, negative one. When the principle that unites my soul to God is cut off, then there is no true life for me. All that remains is the phantom of an outward, false, animal life.

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In the world to come, degrees of blessedness and torment will vary. This is proved by the present state of the souls of different people, or even of the same man at various times, in various circumstances. The simpler, better, and more loving a person is, the more blessed he is inwardly; the more deceitful, evil, and selfish he is, the more unhappy. The more firmly established his faith and the stronger his love, the more blessed he is. The weaker his faith and love, the weaker, the worse he feels. Thus, those who have little or no faith, those who hate their fellow-creatures, are the unhappiest of men. Therefore, remember the future torments!

* * *

Love every man in spite of his falling into sin. Never mind the sins, but remember that the foundation of every human being is the same—the image of God. Other people's weaknesses are always before our eyes: they are malicious, proud, envious, avaricious, covetous, greedy, but you too are not without evil. Perhaps there is even more evil in you than in others. At least, with respect to sinfulness, all men are equal: "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Rom 3:23). All are guilty before God, and all equally require His mercy. Therefore, in addition to loving each other, we must bear with each other and forgive each other—"*forgive men their trespasses*"—so that our heavenly Father will "*also forgive you*" (Matt 6:14). Therefore strive to honor and love the image of God in every man with your heart and soul, disregarding his sins. God alone is Holy and without sin, and see how He loves us, how much He has created and still creates for us, punishing us mercifully and forgiving us generously and

graciously. Honor your neighbor also, in spite of his sins, for he can always improve.

Some men of progress see the Church as an enemy. But is there anyone more full of love, more desirous of our welfare, and wiser in love for mankind (after God Himself) than the Church? Everything that is proper to our nature and most necessary for its good is found in the Church, as in a treasury, since the words of life are contained in the Gospel. The Church is the true mother of all those who correctly believe in Christ, the truest friend of Christians. She sympathizes with and provides all the essential requirements of the soul and body of the Christian through active help, or by providing access to divine help through the power of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, in Whom every soul lives.

* * *

Concerning doxology. The soul involuntarily cries out in praise when you gaze at the starry sky. But it cries out in praise still more when, in looking at the sky and the stars that God created, you remember God's providence to all mankind, how infinitely He loves us, cares for our eternal blessedness, not even sparing His Only-begotten Son for our salvation and our eternal rest in the Heavenly Kingdom! It is impossible not to praise God when you remember that you were created from nothing, that you were predestined from the foundation of the world for eternal blessedness, completely freely, not according to your merits. Remember what grace God has bestowed on you for your salvation during your lifetime, what a countless number of sins are forgiven you, and this not once or twice but an incalculable number of times, what a multitude of natural gifts are given to you, beginning with health and ending with the air you breathe and the smallest drop of water you drink. We are involuntarily inspired to praise Him when we gaze with wonder at the infinite variety of things created on the earth, in the animal kingdom, in the plant kingdom, and in the mineral kingdom. What wise order in all, both in great and small! We involuntarily praise and exclaim, "*How great are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all; the earth is filled with Thy handiwork*" (Psalm 103:24).

If the Church has composed and approved various prayers and psalms (to the Holy Trinity and the saints) for general use, this means that God hears our prayers and is always near those who pray. But people mostly pray as if

there were no God near them, or as though He did not listen to their prayers. Let us give the Lord at least the same amount of attention that good parents show to the requests of their children, at least that attentive love that good parents have for their children. The Lord Himself teaches us: *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?"* (Matt 7:11). Therefore, our requests and prayers will also be answered if we pray with our whole heart. This is the truth. This is from daily experience.

When anger against anyone is roused in your heart, then believe with your whole heart that the devil is at work in your heart. Hate him and his brood, and the anger will leave you. (Do not acknowledge it as something belonging to you, and do not sympathize with it.) This I know from experience. Unfortunately, the devil hides himself behind us, concealing his head and his tail, while we are blind and think that we are doing everything ourselves. We take responsibility for the devil's work as if it were our own, as if it were something fair, although the very idea of there being any fairness in our passions is entirely false, ungodly, and pernicious. Guide yourself by the same rule also in your interaction with others. When you see that anybody bears a grudge against you, do not consider his anger as his own action; no, he is only the passive instrument of the evil one; he has not yet recognized his flattery and is deceived by him. Pray to God that the enemy will leave him and that the Lord will enlighten the eyes of his heart, darkened by the poisonous, noxious breathing of the spirit of evil. We must pray fervently for all those subjected to passions, for the enemy works within them.

* * *

Because of their spiritual nature, passions are contagious. For example, anger, even when not yet expressed in words or acts, still concealed in the heart but reflected slightly in the face and eyes, is transmitted to the soul of another and is perceived by others. If I am disturbed by passion, my disturbance communicates itself to the heart of another, like a kind of spiritual overflow of an impure current from one spiritual vessel into another. If you subdue your passion against your brother, you subdue the same passion in him too. When you are calm, he will also be calm. What a close connection there is between souls! How true are the words of the

apostle: "*For we are members one of another* (Eph 4:25); we, being many, are one bread and one body (1 Cor 10:17); and "*has made from one blood every nation of men*" (Acts 17:26). Therefore the Lord's commandment requires that "*you shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (Matt 22:39). The effectiveness of a preacher's word (or lack thereof) is entirely based on the mutual sympathy or understanding of our souls—if the preacher does not speak from his heart, but hypocritically, the listeners instinctually sense the dissonance between the preacher's words and his heart, his life. In such a case, the preacher's words do not have the power they might have had if he had spoken them sincerely, especially if he had himself in reality fulfilled his own admonitions. Between human souls there is too close a connection and communication. This is why good, pious, sincere dispositions, and especially good works, are communicated to the souls of others.

Since man is both soul and body, there are two sources of support for his life—spiritual and bodily. Air, food, drink, light and warmth sustain the body, and prayer (like air), reading the Word of God, the Life-giving Sacrament, and pious contemplation sustain the life of the spirit.

* * *

You know from experience that walls form no barrier to the flight of thought; it can in a moment fly from your house to beyond the clouds, or from one part of the world to another, from one kingdom to another, from one town to another. Your soul, that thinking, reasoning principle, is the image of God, a small image of the Infinite Spirit, God. If your thought is not restricted by four walls and is not limited by space and time, then what can restrict the Lord, Who has created all things? Can He be restricted by walls? Can He be limited by space and time, however infinite we imagine them to be? O, His dominion is in every place! His eyes see everyone and everything. He sees, as on the palm of His hand, even those who hide themselves in secret places, in the mountains or in inaccessible castles. This is why the Lord sometimes hides His face from you and leaves you in the anguish of spiritual darkness, so that you will always remember by Whose light your soul lives—the Light of God, and if God turns His face from you and takes His Holy Spirit from your heart, then you will be truly left in the darkness of hell, in infernal torments. Then you will indeed, although only in part, understand what the future hell will be.

* * *

Believe steadfastly and always remember that you have a dual nature, that there are two men in you. The first is carnal, diseased by passions, old, of the devil, seeking carnal things and setting his life on them. You must mortify this old man within you and not satisfy him in anything. You must never bend to his sinful, persistent, sickly lamentation. The other man within you is spiritual, new, healthy, Christ's, everywhere seeking Christ, living in Christ (instead of heeding worldly desires), finding peace and life in Christ, wishing for nothing in this world but Christ, and counting earthly blessings but rubbish, in order to win Christ (Phil 3:8). We must despise in every way the requirements of the former man, because their fulfillment destroys the soul. By the same token, we must fulfill all the requirements of the new man, because they lead to true and eternal life. Let every Christian learn this and labor to actually put what he learns into action.

Do not be despondent when the clouds of hell, each one darker than the next, descend on your soul, when infernal malice, envy, doubt, obstinacy, and other passions rise up in your soul. Know that the gathering of these dark clouds on your spiritual horizon is inevitable, but they are not always there and will not remain long. They are like the appearance of dark clouds in the sky in nature—they pass by and disappear, after which the spiritual atmosphere of the soul is cleared up again. In nature there must be clouds in the sky, and the darkening of the light of day is natural, but these clouds are not constant. They soon pass away, and then the light of the sun shines again with renewed power.

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What a wonderful creation is man! Look! That which was created from earth contains the breath of God—personal, independent—the image of God Himself. How much wisdom and beauty there is in the construction of man's bodily temple, how much wisdom and love. In a word, how much likeness to God is shown in the life of man, who has dominion over the earth, as it is said, "*Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion … over all the earth*" (Gen 1:26). But lest you grow proud, see what happens to you, man, when that which is according to God's image in you leaves your body as from its temple! It

will be as though you had never been; you will disappear from this world. The temple of your spirit will lose all its goodness and beauty; it will become earth and return into the earth from which it was taken (Gen 3:19), completely becoming one with it. What a wonderful creation of God is man! God has wonderfully placed in the dust His Own image, the immortal spirit. But marvel, Christian, still more at the wisdom, omnipotence and mercy of the Creator! He changes and transforms the bread and wine into His Most-pure Body and Blood, and He takes up His abode in them Himself, by His Most-pure and Life-creating Spirit, so that His Body and Blood are together Spirit and Life. And why does He do this? In order to cleanse you, a sinner, from your sins, to sanctify you and to unite you, thus sanctified, to Himself, and thus united to deify you and make you blessed and immortal. "*Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!*" (Rom 11:33).

Have you seen how respectfully, humbly, and orderly subordinates of all classes and all stations behave before their superiors, thereby fulfilling their duty of subordination? Have you not seen with what veneration and strict etiquette those that surround a king behave?

All these are merely examples of the behavior of creatures in relation to the Creator. Their welfare and the very purpose of their lives are found in this correct behavior before the Creator, in obedience to His laws.

* * *

Sometimes a man seems to pray fervently, but his prayer does not bring his heart the desired fruits of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Why is this? It is because while praying the appointed prayers he has not sincerely repented of the sins he has committed during the day, through which he has defiled his heart, the temple of Christ, and through which he has angered the Lord. But had he remembered them, had he repented of them in all sincerity and judged himself impartially, "*the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding*" (Phil 4:7) would immediately have entered into his heart. In the daily prayers of the Orthodox Church there is an enumeration of sins, but not all of them, and often the very sins by which we have bound ourselves are not mentioned. Therefore, we must absolutely list them ourselves during our prayer, clearly recognizing their heaviness with humility and heartfelt contrition. This is why, in the evening prayers,

during the enumeration of sins, we read the following: “And all other sins I may have committed, whether in knowledge or in ignorance.” It is left to our own will to make mention of those particular sins.

Our faith and Church is like a most honored, holy, godly, strong, venerable eldress who never grows old, and in whom a young, living spirit always abides, giving life to her true children. We always behave with great respect to old people, honoring their gray hair and wisdom as the fruits of experience, highly valuing each of their words, applying them to our own life. In the same way, we should especially honor the Church, venerate her holiness, antiquity, her unshaken steadfastness, her divinely enlightened wisdom and spiritual experience, her soul-saving commandments and ordinances, her divine services, sacraments, and rites. How can we do otherwise than respect her, even if only for having saved in her bosom a countless multitude of people, resettling them into the abode of eternal peace and joy, not forgetting them even after their death, but remembering them until now on earth, eternally praising and glorifying their virtues as her true children? Where will you find a more grateful friend, a gentler mother? Therefore let all Christians attach themselves wholly, with their hearts, to the Church of Christ, that they may become firmly established in the Church until the end of their temporal life! May they all be zealous for the fulfillment of all its commandments and ordinances, and may they obtain eternal salvation in the Church through Christ Jesus our Lord!

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According to God’s wise ordering of this world, one thing precedes another, and one replaces another—dishonor and honor, poverty and wealth, health and sickness. Before bestowing wealth upon anyone, God often tests him by extreme poverty, and sometimes He deprives the rich of everything they had. Before honor, He dispenses dishonor, and to those raised to honor He sometimes sends humiliation, so that we may learn to value God’s gifts and not be proud in our prosperity, knowing that it is the gift of the Master, undeserved by us.

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It is necessary to rouse the heart to pray; otherwise, it will become completely dry. The attributes of our prayer must be love of God, sincerity,

and simplicity. We must pray in spirit, because God is a spirit, and not flesh; we must pray truthfully, and not falsely, because God is Truth. The same can be said about prayers to the saints. Do not call upon them only with the lips, for they have neither lips nor voice, nothing corporeal, but rather with your heart or soul on fire within you. Then they will hear you, for everything seeks that which is like unto it. Yes, it is not flesh and blood that will inherit the kingdom of God, but the pure spirit, burning with love for God.

* * *

"*Do not quench the spirit*" (Thess 5:19), says the Word of God. Let every Christian, especially every priest and instructor of children, remember this always. We who are priests must especially have a burning spirit in our high service to God and mankind. We can do so much for God, for men, and for ourselves, if only we apply ourselves to our work with faith and love, zealously, with vehemence, energetically! And how little, dry, and fruitless will be our service if we do our work indolently, slothfully, coldly, without any zeal or energy! We shall have much to answer for before God, both for ourselves and for those entrusted to our care.

Be attentive to yourself when a poor man begs alms of you. The enemy will try at that very moment to make your heart cold, fill it with indifference, even scorn for the poor man. Overcome in yourself this unchristian and inhuman disposition; awake compassionate love in your heart for this man who is like you in every way, since he is a member of Christ and your own self: "*for we are members of one another*" (Eph 4:25). He is a temple of the Holy Spirit, just as you are. Then Christ the Lord will love and help you as well. Whatever the needy may ask of you, fulfill his request as well as you can. "*Give to him who asks thee, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away*" (Matt 5:42).

Pronounce the words of prayer with firmness, from the heart. When praying in the evening, do not forget to confess those sins into which you have fallen during the past day to the Holy Spirit with all sincerity and contrition. A few moments of fervent repentance, and you will be cleansed by the Holy Spirit from every impurity. You will be whiter than snow, and tears that purify the heart will flow from your eyes. You will be covered

with the garment of Christ's righteousness, and you will be united to Him, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

* * *

Spiritual poverty consists in considering ourselves as not even existing, and God alone as having existence; in honoring His words above everything in the world; in not sparing anything, even our own life, to fulfill them; in following God's Will in all things, both for ourselves and others, entirely renouncing our own will. The man who is poor in spirit says with his whole heart: "Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven." It is as though he himself disappears; everywhere and in everything he wishes to see God, both in himself and in others. "Let everything be Thine, not mine." He wishes to contemplate God's holiness, His Kingdom, His will in himself and in all others. We desire to see Him alone filling the human heart, as it should be, because He alone is All-merciful and All-perfect, All-creating; while the enemy—the devil and his minions—and those who oppose God are thieves in the Kingdom of God, adversaries of God. To him who is poor in spirit the whole world is nothing. Everywhere he sees God alone giving life to everything and ruling everything. For him there is no place without God, no moment without God. Everywhere and at every minute he is with God, as though alone with Him. He who is poor in spirit does not dare and does not think of trying to comprehend the incomprehensible, to discover God's mysteries, to philosophize uselessly. He puts his faith only in the word of the Lord, the Life-giver, knowing that every word of His is truth, spirit, and eternal life. He puts his faith in the words of His Church, always directed in all truth by the Holy Spirit. He believes as a child believes his father or mother, not requiring proof, but perfectly relying on their judgment. He who is poor in spirit considers himself the very last and the most sinful of all. He considers himself worthy of being trampled underfoot by everyone.

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How vividly God's saints saw God before them, the saints who through the Holy Spirit compiled prayers to guide themselves and us. With what fear and trembling they stood before God in prayer, but also with what love and hope! Every word of their prayers says: "God is with us! God within us

hears each of our words, sees every thought, every wish, every teardrop, even part of a drop.”

* * *

Sometimes we stand praying in church or at home in a state of spiritual and bodily lassitude. At such moment, our soul is paralyzed, cold, unfruitful like the barren church of the Gentiles, but as soon as we make an effort and force our heart to sincerely pray to God, as soon as we turn our thoughts and heart toward Him with living faith, our soul immediately becomes enlivened, warm, and fruitful. What sudden tranquility, what lightness, what emotion, what inward holy fire, what tears of sorrow for our sins, what a sincere feeling of penitence for displeasing the Most-merciful Master, what light in the heart and mind, what an abundant stream of living water diffused in the heart, flowing freely from the tongue, or from the pen and pencil, if we are writing! The wilderness of the soul blossoms like a lily at the coming of the Lord into the heart. O, why do we not turn our hearts more often to the Lord? How much peace and comfort does He always give us from his secret treasuries! “*O Lord, how plentiful is the abundance of Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee!*” (Psalm 30:20).

How cunning and careful a bird is! It does not let itself be caught in God’s wide world, and when it sees anybody approaching, trying to catch it, it immediately flies up from the earth and saves itself from the fowler. In the same way, the Christian must be wise and watchful to prevent the spiritual fowler from catching his soul. Our soul is like a heavenly bird; the devil, a wicked fowler, seeks to devour souls. As the bird, flying up to heaven, saves itself from the fowler, we must save ourselves when we see the devil striving to catch our soul by using earthly things. We must immediately forsake these things with our heart, not for a moment allowing ourselves to become attached to them. We must fly up in our thoughts to Jesus Christ, our Saviour, and thus we shall easily be delivered “*from the snare of the hunter*” (Psalm 90:3).

The way to succeed in any good work. When you are praying at home during evening or morning prayers or in the church during divine service, be anxious in your heart to accomplish this particular good work, and desire with your whole heart to fulfill it for the glory of God. The Lord and His

most-pure Mother will unfailingly teach you, will instill in your heart some bright idea of how to accomplish it. If you wish to write a discourse or a sermon and do not know what to write about, if there is no living water in your heart, you have only to ask for this during your prayer. The Lord and His most-pure Mother will unfailingly and clearly show you the subject for your sermon, and your mind and heart will be enlightened by a clear knowledge of all the necessary aspects of your subject.

* * *

Thank God every day with your whole heart for giving you life in His image and likeness, a reasoning, free, and immortal life. Especially thank God for restoring and guiding you to life eternal after you had fallen into eternal death, and for doing so not simply by the action of His omnipotence, for this would not correspond to His justice, but by giving His Only-begotten Son, Who suffered and died for our redemption. Thank Him also for daily giving you life, even though you have fallen from life to death countless times by your own free will. Thank Him for giving you life the very moment you say with your whole heart, "*Father, I have sinned against heaven and before You!*" (Luke 15:18). Thank Him also for frequently delivering you from sickness, though you imprudently throw yourself into danger and sickness, the harbingers of bodily death. Thank Him for correcting your faults and for not depriving you of earthly life, knowing that it is dear to you, knowing that you are not yet ready for the future, eternal life. Thank Him for all the resources He gives for life, for all the joys and sorrows of life. Everything is from Him, the All-merciful Father; everything comes from the First Life, Who has apportioned and given life to all.

A man has a noble and elevated spirit when he mercifully and generously scatters his gifts on all and when he rejoices at every opportunity of doing good and giving pleasure to others, without expecting a reward. A man has a noble and elevated spirit if he never grows conceited and haughty toward those who frequently visit him and take advantage of his generosity, if he does not neglect them in any respect, if he does not underrate them in any degree in his thoughts, but esteems them as he esteemed them at their first meeting with him, or even esteems them more. As it is, it often happens that we grow conceited and proud toward those who have become "ours," and having become accustomed to them, we speedily grow tired of them, and

reckon them as nothing. We often rate a person lower even than a beloved animal or a favorite object.

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It is sometimes a good idea to say a few words of our own during prayer, inspired by fervent faith and love to the Lord. Let us not always converse with God in the words of others, not always remain children in faith and hope! We must also show our own mind, exclaim a good word from our own heart also (Psalm 44:1). Moreover, we grow too accustomed to the words of others and grow cold in prayer. And how pleasing to the Lord are these childish words of ours, coming directly from a believing, loving, and thankful heart! It is impossible to explain this; it is enough to say that when you are praying to God with your own words, the soul trembles with joy; it becomes wholly alight, enlivened, and blessed. You will utter few words, but you will experience such blessedness as you would not have obtained from saying the longest and most touching prayers written by others, pronounced out of habit and insincerely.

When you ask anything of the Lord, immediately contemplate His merciful and generous right hand bestowing His gifts on you, for it is His right hand that has given, and still gives everything to everyone from His limitless goodness. Whether or not you obtain what you ask for, consider it mad to doubt that you will receive what you request. This is a madness similar to that which the Psalmist described: "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*" (Psalm 13:1). In the same way, when we ask any good and generous man for help, we see his outstretched hand before us, for earthly benefactors, following the example of their All-merciful Father, are merciful and generous, and give us that which we request immediately, as it is said: "*Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*" (Matt 7:9–11).

When you experience oppressive complaining in your heart and lack of faith in a certain sacred object, then know that the enemy is in your heart, and that he mocks your ignorance, your weakness, and your inconstancy in faith. Sincerely and immediately condemn your foolishness, blindness,

sinful inconstancy in faith, your lack of gratitude to God for the former light in your heart and the benefits received through faith in that object (for example, the relics of a saint). Even though your heart in its sinful obstinacy now refuses to believe, or does not now believe as it formerly believed, the Master will have mercy upon you. Your anguish will cease, and you will be at rest. O, the enemy wishes that even in matters of faith everything should correspond to his falsehood!

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The new man (renewed) finds pleasure in obedience, but the old man wishes to resist and rebel. Therefore, O Lord, Thy Will be done. I accept, as an expression of Your Will, all that is required of me by the authorities set over me, all that others do to me (patience), all that happens to me, for nothing happens without You. You are in everything, throughout everything, and everything.

* * *

God is a spiritual Being from Whom everything has received its existence and without Whom nothing can be imagined. In Him everything has its origin, continuation, life, and preservation. He is infinitely greater than any time and space. He has neither beginning nor end, and next to Him, everything is as though nonexistent. He is wholly everywhere. He is not restricted by space, atom, mountain, heavenly body, sea, air, fire, earth. He Himself eternally fills all space, and He Himself by His Power keeps in existence everything that exists. He is in every place, in every unimaginable point of space, and limitlessly contains every space—in a word, God is He Who Is, the only One Who is the source of all existence.

* * *

If your brother does something wrong or acts negligently during a church service, do not become irritated either inwardly or outwardly with him, but be generously indulgent to his fault, remembering that you also commit many, many faults. You are also a man with all possible infirmities, yet God is long-suffering, most merciful, and He forgives you and all of us our iniquities countless times. Remember the words of the Lord’s Prayer: “And

forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” These words should always remind us that we are great sinners before God; and, remembering this, we should be humble in the depths of our hearts, not severe to the faults of our brothers, who are weak as we are. Since we do not judge ourselves severely, we must not judge others severely, for our brothers are our members, almost our very selves. Irritability of temper proceeds from lack of self-knowledge, from pride, and also from the fact that we do not realize the great corruption of our nature, and have very little knowledge of the meek and humble Jesus.

* * *

God tests the various sinful attachments of our hearts in different ways. The miser He tests through the loss (in whole, or in part) of his money or his property, allowing thieves to steal or brigands to rob him. Another He tests through fire or flood, another through loss of money in unsuccessful business affairs, another through illness and medical expenses, another through the loss of wife, sister, or friend, another through dishonor. He tests everyone in different ways, in order to disclose to each individual the weak, diseased parts of his heart, and to teach each person to correct himself. In many, a sword shall pierce through their own soul, so that the thoughts of their hearts may be revealed (Luke 2:35). Therefore, whatever loss may have occurred to your property, believe that it is the will of God, and say, “*The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; Blessed be the name of the Lord*” (Job 1:21).

Why does a person sometimes suddenly work himself into such a fury that he becomes violently angry, speaks abruptly and incoherently, wrings his hands, tears his hair, or in his passion strikes others, breaks everything that falls into his hands, or does other things proper only to a madman? Evidently, he does this because the spirits of evil are working in his heart, instigating him to every wickedness, breathing evil and destruction upon everyone and everything. Why are there so many suicides in the world, as well as murderers? Because of the work of the ageless murderer, the devil, in the hearts of murderers and suicides. This is why Christ the Saviour and the Christian faith command everyone to have that meekness and humility that will not allow the spirits of evil and pride, who desire the death of each and every person, to work in the hearts of true Christians. The Lord says,

"*learn from Me, for I am gently and lowly in heart*" (Matt 11:29). Wrath is a terrible, unnatural phenomenon in a person; it is often aroused in the heart for the most insignificant reasons—mostly through self-love or pride concealed in our heart. We must remember that "*the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God*" (James 1:20).

For him who truly believes in God, all material things, even the entire visible world, seem to disappear. He cannot even imagine a point in space without God. Everywhere he contemplates the One Infinite Being—God. He imagines that with every breath of air he breathes God; for him, the Lord is everywhere and in everything. The creatures of the earth become to him as though nonexistent, while he himself willingly vanishes mentally in order to give space also in himself for the one God, Who alone is, and Who works all things within him.

* * *

Sometimes, just when we begin to delight in the Lord, the enemy suddenly brings great sorrow upon us, either by himself or through other people. Such is the lot of those who are laboring in this life for the Lord. For example, you have just received consolation and joy in the Cup of the Lord, but immediately after the service a fiery temptation assails you, and with it heavy sorrow. Even at the very Cup, the enemy sets his snares for you and disturbs you through various thoughts, and even if you don't want to, you must fight them. You may wish to remain in the Lord's consolation for a very long time, but the enemy will not allow it. While our passions have authority over us, while the old man still lives and has not died within us, we will have to endure various temptations in life and the battle between the old man and the new.

* * *

These reassuring words of the Lord give great encouragement, consolation and hope to those who pray: "*Ask, and it will be given to you … Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone?*" (Matt 7:7, 9). If anyone asks me anything, and I—though I am evil due to the corruption of my nature—listen to his requests, his words moving my heart to compassion and my hand to giving, then will not my words, my most sincere prayer, move the Fountain of mercies, the Lover of

mankind, to have mercy upon me and help me, who am a sinner, but still His creature, and the work of His hands? If earthly fathers are merciful, will not the Heavenly Father be still more merciful? If I am merciful, will not God, the source of all mercy, be still more merciful? "*If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*" (Matt 7:11). Let your faith and hope in God be strengthened by the relationships between fathers and their children. For all of us are the children of the Father Who is in heaven, Who is in truth the one Father of all creatures.

When you feel that there is no peace in your heart because of a passionate attachment to something worldly, and instead of peace, your heart breathes irritability and anger, be immediately on your guard, and do not let your heart become filled with infernal fire. Pray fervently and strengthen your passionate, impatient heart by the power of God. Be completely sure that this evil inflammation of the heart is the work of the enemy, and he wages a bitter assault on the heart through a full stomach. This I know from experience.

* * *

When you visit any of your relations or friends, do not go to their house in order to eat and drink well, but go there in order to take part in friendly and sincere conversation with them, to refresh your soul from the cares of this world through their sincere friendship and loving conversation, to be mutually comforted by your common faith. "*For I do not seek yours, but you*" (2 Cor 12:14). says the Apostle.

Charity "*does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth*" (1 Cor 13:6). It often happens with us that we notice the unrighteous, sinful actions of other people, or we hear of them, and we have a sinful habit of rejoicing at such actions and shamelessly expressing our joy through foolish laughter. This is wrong, unchristian, uncharitable, and ungodly. It shows that we do not have Christian love for our neighbor in our hearts, for charity "*does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth*" (1 Cor 13:6). From this moment, let us stop acting thus, lest we be condemned with the workers of iniquity.

Do not be full of anger, retaliation, and murderous thoughts, even toward animals, lest your own soul be murdered by the spiritual enemy who

inspires wickedness in you even toward dumb animals, and lest you should become accustomed to malice and vengeance against people as well. Remember that animals are called to life by God's mercy to enjoy their existence as much as they can during their short life. "*The Lord is good unto all*" (Psalm 144:9). Do not beat them if they are unreasonable, or if they play tricks, or if any of your property is damaged by them. "*A righteous man regards the life of his animal*" (Prov 12:10).

When holy peace reigns in my soul, then within me dwells the King of Peace, the Lord Jesus Christ, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit. At such times, I should be especially full of gratitude to the Lord of Peace, and I should endeavor with all my strength to preserve this peace through fervent prayer and abstinence from every sin, both internal and external.

* * *

The Comforter—the Holy Spirit who fills the whole universe—penetrates into all faithful, meek, humble, good, and simple human souls, dwelling in them, enlivening and strengthening them. He becomes one spirit with them. He becomes everything to them—light, strength, peace, joy, success in their undertakings (especially in a pious life), everything that is good. He goes through "*all spirits that are rational, pure, and most subtle*" (Wis 7:23). We "*have all been made to drink into one Spirit*" (1 Cor 12:13). All pious people are filled with the Spirit of God like a sponge filled with water.

When you walk in a forest, garden, or meadow and see the young shoots of the plants, the fruits on the trees, and the variety of the flowers of the field, learn a lesson from God's plants. Every summer, the trees become covered with shoots and invariably grow in height and width. It seems as though every year, each tree tries to grow even more than the previous year thanks to the strength given it by God. Therefore, say to yourself: every day, every year, I also must absolutely grow higher and higher morally, better and better, more and more perfect; I must go forward on the road to the Kingdom of Heaven to the Father in Heaven, through the strength of our Lord Jesus Christ and His Spirit dwelling and working within me. As a field is adorned with a multitude of flowers, the field of my own soul should also be adorned with all the flowers of virtue. As the trees bring forth flowers

and afterward fruit, so must my soul also bring forth the fruits of faith and good works.

* * *

Do not feed your body with a passion. Do not pamper your body; do not cater to it. Do not give it undue strength against the spirit. Otherwise, when it is necessary to labor in spirit—for instance, to pray or write a spiritual essay or book—you will find that the flesh has overpowered the spirit and has bound it hand and foot. The flesh overthrows all the impulses of the spirit, and it will not let the spirit rise and come to its full power. The spirit will then become the slave of the flesh.

* * *

Our love for God and neighbor will especially show itself, and its purity, strength, and constancy will be revealed when there is an attack of antagonistic power (of the devil), like fire in our hearts, endeavoring to implant aversion, antagonism, contempt, hatred, and enmity in our hearts. Love is strengthened within us when opposing forces try to uproot it, when we struggle in every way against these opposing forces, for by our struggle with the enemy we purify, exalt, and strengthen our love. As a reward for this constant battle, waged in love for God and our neighbor, for this firmness, for this fiery, stubborn, constant, invisible warfare against the spirits of evil, God weaves shining heavenly crowns for the warriors of love for God and neighbor. In this respect, the holy ascetics, the venerable ones, are worthy of thousands of crowns. Because of their love for God, they forsook the world and all that is in it; they went away into deserted, uninhabited places; and there, shut up in their cells, they spent all their life in contemplation of God, in prayer, in renouncing their own will, in fasting, vigilance, ascetic labors, and in performing great deeds for the love of God, enduring during their whole life the assaults of the opposing forces that tried every possible stratagem to shake their faith, trust, and especially love for God. To fight, for the love of God, against our own flesh and the devil, that crafty, mighty, and evil enemy—not for a few hours, days, or months, but for many years, sometimes sixty or seventy—is not this worthy of crowns? And what, in comparison with these ascetics, are people living in the world, falling so often into sin even without being assaulted, and

defeated by their own flesh without even being attacked? What in comparison to these ascetics are worldly people, living according to their own will, in luxury, in pleasures of every kind, gorgeously appareled in soft raiment (Luke 7:25), given over to pride, ambition, envy, hatred, avarice, irritability, wrath, revenge, amusements, fornication, drunkenness—all possible vices, although not all in the same person? They are caught alive, without any resistance, in the power of the devil, and therefore he does not attack them, but leaves them long entangled in his nets, in the calm and self-forgetfulness that precede death.

Remember the words of Scripture: "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*" (Rom 12:21). If people offend you, irritate you, treat you contemptuously and with anger, do not repay them in the same way, but be gentle, meek, and kind, respectful, and loving to those very people who behave unworthily to you. If you are agitated and speak excitedly, rudely, contemptuously, without love, then you will be vanquished, and those who offend you will have the right to say, "*Physician, heal yourself*" (Luke 4:23), or "*And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? … First remove the plank from your own eye*" (Matt 7:3, 5). Do not wonder, then, if the affronts of those who offend you are often repeated, for they will notice your weakness and will irritate you intentionally. "*Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good*" (Rom 12:21). Show the one who offends you that he has not offended you, but rather himself, and pity him with your whole heart for being so easily overcome by passions, for being spiritually sick. The more rude and irritated he is, the more hatred he nourishes toward you, the more meekness and love you must show him. Then you will surely conquer him. Good is always stronger than evil, and therefore always conquers. Remember also that we are all weak, very easily overcome by passions; therefore, be meek and indulgent to those who sin against you, knowing that you yourself often suffer from the same infirmity as your brother. Forgive those who trespass against you, so that God may forgive your trespasses, incomparably greater than the trespasses of others against you. Be always calm, dignified, unsuspicious, firm, simple, and kind-hearted, and you will always triumph over your enemies. "*He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself. Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you*" (Prov 9:7, 8).

Sometimes the devil's cunning is expressed in the following way: when we see any sin or vice in our brother or in society, he strikes our heart with indifference and coldness and reluctance, or rather with shameful fear to say a firm, accusatory word against the iniquity, to break the horn of the sinner. Christ, my King! Give me apostolic zeal and the fire of the Holy Spirit in my heart, so that I may always boldly rise up against insolent vice, especially against the vice that corrupts many. May I not spare anyone, both for the sake of their own salvation and that of the rest of Thy people, lest they be seduced and fall, seeing the overflow of vice! "*But whosoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea*" (Matt 18:6), "*For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost*" (Matt 18:11).

When the foolish thought of counting up any of your good works enters into your head, immediately correct your fault and rather count up your sins, your continual and innumerable offenses against the All-merciful and Righteous Master, and you will find that their number is as great as the number of grains of sand in the sea, while your virtues in comparison with them are as nothing.

* * *

When your heart is struck by miserliness, say to yourself, "My life is Christ, the Beloved of all. He is my inexhaustible wealth, my inexhaustible food, my inexhaustible drink. Our blind flesh dreams of finding life in food and in money and fights against those who deprive it of these material means of life. But be completely sure that your life is not money and food, but mutual love for the sake of love for God. Remember that God is Love, uniting all living creatures by the laws of love and bringing forth life from the union of love.

* * *

When praying, observe the rule that it is better to say five words from the depth of your heart than ten thousand words with your tongue only. When you see that your heart is cold and prays unwillingly, stop praying and warm your heart with some kind of vivid image, such as your wickedness, your spiritual poverty, misery, and blindness, or the great benefits that God

bestows every moment upon you and all mankind, especially upon Christians, and then pray slowly and fervently. If you do not have time to say all the prayers, not to worry! You will receive incomparably greater benefit from praying fervently and without rushing than if you had said all your prayers hastily and without feeling: "*I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue*" (1 Cor 14:19). But it would, of course, be very good if we say these ten thousand words in prayer with the proper understanding and feeling. The Lord does not forsake those who labor for Him and who stand long before Him, for with what measure they mete, He will measure to them again, and He will reward them for their abundance of sincere words of prayer by sending into their souls a corresponding abundance of spiritual light, warmth, peace, and joy. It is good to pray long and continually, but "*All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given*" (Matt 19:11). It is better for those who are not capable of long prayers to say short prayers, but with a soul on fire.

In the perpetual miracle of the change of the bread and wine into the true Body and Blood of Christ united with His Divinity and soul, I see the miracle of the perpetual quickening of man through the divine breath, his creation into a living soul. It is written, "*and man became a living being soul*" (Gen 2:7), but upon the Holy Altar the bread and wine, after their change, become not only a living soul, but a quickening spirit (1 Cor 15:45). And this is all accomplished before my eyes, and I experience it both with my soul and my body, feeling it vividly. My God! How awesome are the Mysteries that You create! Of what unspeakable Mysteries have You made me the witness and partaker! Glory to You, my Creator! Glory to You, Creator of the Body and Blood of Christ!

Even the saints of God were at times overcome with diabolical despair and despondency. What, therefore, can we sinners expect? O, the enemy often wounds us with the wrath, humiliation, and cruel despondency of the heart! We must continually turn to God and be every moment with Him, lest we be besieged by the wrath and despondency of the enemy. There is another way of escaping from them—the broad way of the world. If you give yourself up to worldly pleasures, despondency will leave you for a time, at least while the pleasures last. But afterward you will be enslaved by these pleasures; they will become a necessity to you, and you will find comfort and joy in them alone. May God preserve every Christian from

finding his only way of escape from the despondency of the devil through pleasures! It is better to walk the narrow path, to patiently bear despondency, and to seek frequent help and deliverance from the Lord Jesus Christ, Who always gives joy to those laboring for their salvation for His sake, instead of entering on the broad and smooth way of the world and purchasing there, through the pleasures of the flesh, passing freedom from the spirit of despondency. By using this spirit of despondency, the enemy has driven many from the narrow path of salvation onto the broad, smooth path that leads to destruction.

* * *

You are praying, your prayer is proceeding successfully, and you have inward proof that the Lord hears it and receives it favorably—your thoughts are at peace, you feel lightness and sweetness in your heart. But at the end of your prayer, through some slight infirmity of your heart and thoughts, a heavy burden falls on your heart, a fire that weakens the heart, and you feel extreme difficulty in praying, even an aversion to prayer, instead of the former lightness and inclination to prayer. Do not despair, friend! These are only the snares of the enemy who loves to mock us, especially at the end of our God-pleasing efforts, hoping we will fall into despondency and consider all our previous labors in God's holy work as useless. Learn from this, and in the future, do not extinguish your spirit even for a moment during your prayer; pray in spirit and truth, unremittingly, not flattering the Lord by a single word of prayer (i.e., not pronouncing a single word affectedly, hypocritically). Let your prayer be only the expression of truth, the trumpet of the Holy Spirit, and do not let it serve the enemy's lie even in a single word, do not let it be in any way the tool of the devil. In order to release your soul from the load of the enemy and to extinguish his fire, pray fervently to God, profoundly confessing your fault before Him (i.e., your hypocrisy during prayer), and you will obtain relief and peace. Do not hurry; speak and do everything slowly. You will succeed. It is the enemy who hurries and disturbs us, for there is no point in confused hurry.

* * *

"Our Father! Thy kingdom come." The Lord reigns everywhere, in the whole visible world (being in every place) and in all the angelic hosts. He

also reigns by his infinite Power and Truth over the spirits of evil and over evil and unrighteous men. Some of them He has bound in everlasting chains of darkness for judgment at the final day, and others He punishes in various ways in this life and will punish in the future life with inextinguishable fire. But He, the Truth, does not reign in demons and in unrighteous men by His truth, because falsehood is in them. He does not reign in them by His love, because malice is in them. He does not reign in the unrighteous by faith, neither by hope, but He reigns in them by the strict fulfillment of His laws. "*Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46). "*Keep My commandments*" (John 14:15). He reigns in every action of my body and soul, even in the smallest (for instance, in speech), for my body obeys His laws in feeding, repose, sleep, growth, and walking, and both thought and word are formed and move according to His laws, but He does not always reign in my heart, in the inclinations of my heart, and in my free will. I frequently incline to evil and do evil, instead of the good offered to me. I often oppose Him and His laws. I am often weak in faith, unbelieving, selfish, proud. I often despise others, envy others; I am avaricious, covetous, sensual, gratifying my sinful flesh in every way. I am ambitious, impatient, irritable, slothful. I do few or no good works at all, and if I do any, I do them more as a result of favorable circumstances, not because of the inclination and tendency of my heart. I do not pity those who suffer, though they are members of the one body of the Church. In a word, the Lord does not always reign in my thoughts, feelings, and acts of faith, hope, and love.

We must pray to have the constant and firm conviction in our hearts that everything we have comes from God—our soul and body, their prosperity or adversity, all our possessions, as well as all the circumstances of our life. These things come from God's Power, and not from nature, or chance, or from ourselves. If you cease praying to God, you will soon forget your Benefactor, Creator, and Lord, and in forgetting Him, you will fall into every evil. Therefore, you see that prayer always brings you real benefit.

* * *

Both the spiritual and bodily powers of a man increase and become perfected and strengthened with exercise. By exercising your hand in writing, sewing, or knitting, you become an expert in such work; by

frequently exercising yourself in composition you learn to write easily and well; by exercising yourself in doing good works or in conquering your passions and temptations, you will in time learn to do good works easily and with delight, and with the help of God's all-active grace you will easily learn to conquer your passions. But if you cease writing, sewing, knitting, or if you only do them sporadically, you will write, sew, and knit badly. If you do not exercise yourself in composition, or do so sporadically, if you live in the material cares of life only, it will become difficult for you even to connect a few words together, especially upon spiritual subjects—the work will seem like a Herculean labor. If you cease praying, or pray only sporadically, then prayer will become oppressive to you. If you do not fight against your passions, or only do so sporadically and feebly, you will find it very difficult to fight against them, and you will often be conquered by them. They will give you no rest, and your life will be poisoned by them if you do not learn how to conquer these evil, inward enemies that always seek to settle in your heart. Therefore, labor and activity are indispensable for everyone. Life without activity is not life, but something monstrous, a sort of phantom life. This is why it is the duty of every man to fight continually and persistently against the slothfulness of the flesh. God preserve every Christian from indulging it! "*And those who are Christ's have crucified the [lazy, evil, sin-loving] flesh with its passions and desires*" (Gal 5:24). "*For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away*" (Matt 25:29).

A man who is angry with us is a sick man; we must apply a poultice to his heart—love. We must treat him kindly, speak to him gently, lovingly. And if the malice within him is not deeply rooted, but only a temporary fit of anger, you will see how his heart will melt through your kindness and love, how good will conquer evil. A Christian must always be kind, gracious, and wise in order to conquer evil with good.

* * *

If anyone has offended you, do not hold a grudge against him. When he who has offended you looks kindly at you and turns to speak to you, do not let your heart incline to evil, but talk pleasantly and good-humoredly to him, as if nothing had happened between you. Learn to conquer evil with

good, anger with kindness, meekness, and humility. Do not say in your heart regarding the one who has offended you, “What? He speaks to me, after having offended me, counting his offense against me as nothing? I do not consider him worthy of speaking to me; I reject, despise him; let him know what it means to offend me!” Do not be proud or hold grudges. Do not speak in this way, lest the Lord be angered by your hard-heartedness.

* * *

The entire material world is as nothing before God; only spiritual beings —angels and men—are something. Only those creatures who are near to God have a lasting existence, since they have His image and likeness. The remainder pass away like shadows: “*Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away*” (Matt 24:35).

We must always remember that the devil is continually trying to litter our soul with the refuse of hell, of which there is already too much within us. Therefore, whether your heart is obscured by animosity, impatience, or irritability; whether you begrudge your brother your material possessions; whether your are wounded by love of gain or money, by the confrontational and offensive words of others, by despondency, despair, envy, doubt, weak faith, outright unbelief, vanity; whether you are slothful in prayer or in any good work or in the performance of your duty, say to yourself with firm assurance: this is the refuse of the devil; this is the darkness of hell. With faith and hope in the Lord, by continually watching over yourself, you will be able, with God’s help, to escape from this dirt and darkness. “*He who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him*” (1 John 5:18).

All my happiness and unhappiness is contained in the thoughts and inclinations of my heart. If the thoughts and inclinations of my heart accord with God’s truth or with the will of my God, then I am at rest, filled with divine light, joy, and blessedness. If not, I am uneasy, filled with spiritual, soul-corrupting darkness, heaviness, and despondency. If I completely change the false, ungodly thoughts and inclinations of my heart into true ones, pleasing to God, then I again obtain rest and blessedness.

* * *

My neighbor is a being with the same rights I have. He is a person, as I am, created in the image of God, and since he is the same as I am, I must love him as I love myself. "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (Matt 22:39). Therefore, I must watch over him as over my own flesh and blood, behaving lovingly, gently, and kindly to him, forgiving him his faults, as I willingly forgive myself my own, as I long for forgiveness or indulgence from others toward my own weaknesses, as I hope that other people will not even notice them, as though they did not exist, or that they will notice them with indulgence and benevolence.

In order to commune of the life-giving Holy Mysteries with undoubting faith and to vanquish all the snares and attacks of the enemy, imagine that that which you receive from the Cup is "He Who is," He Who alone exists. If this is the disposition of your thoughts and heart, then by receiving the Holy Mysteries you will obtain peace, joy, and new life, and you will recognize in your heart that the Lord truly dwells within you, and you dwell in the Lord. This is from experience.

* * *

When praying to the Theotokos, you call Her an abyss of goodness and mercies. Imitate Her goodness and generosity to those who have need of your goodness and mercy, as much as you can. Do not be angry with them, do not despise them, but the more they require your help, the more you must love them. Consider their position clearly and soberly according to the teaching of the Gospel, putting yourself in their place, and the Mother of God will multiply Her mercies upon you.

* * *

The words you use are not all the same—some vivify, others slay your soul, as well as, perhaps, that of your neighbor. Therefore, "*Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt*" (Col 4:6). "*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers*" (Eph 4:29).

The bodiless enemy enters the heart of man through satiety and drunkenness—this can be seen by anyone who is observant. This is the reason why the more a person drinks, the greater his inclination to drunkenness (because the power of the enemy over the man increases). This

is why you notice in drunkards a power involuntarily drawing them to satisfy their passion: their inward craving for wine. The enemy is in the hearts of these miserable people. How can the demon of drunkenness be driven out? Through prayer and fasting. The enemy enters the hearts of men because they have given themselves up to a carnal way of life—to gluttony, and because they do not pray. It is, therefore, natural that he can be driven out from them by opposite means—through prayer and fasting.

* * *

What if God's preventive grace was not bestowed on us, what if it did not unexpectedly, suddenly embrace all our being after we sinned, inclining our hearts to repentance and tears? What if it we would be left to our own devices to acquire repentance and tears? How accursed would we then be! Few, very few, could be delivered from the burden of their sins, for our nature is slothful in exerting itself to effort, especially in the spiritual life. Without help, without significant alleviation and sweetness of spiritual labors, we would very quickly abandon ascetic effort, throwing aside the work of salvation. But God, the Most Wise and Merciful Father, sometimes lightens and sweetens our spiritual burden, sometimes makes it heavier for our trial to teach us patience, and to weaken our crafty, destructive flesh, wisely changing one approach with the other. The work of our salvation, thank God, is thus always made possible. It is never too difficult and is very often pleasant to us.

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How inexpressibly sad it is to see that on the Lord's feasts the enemy collects his tribute—and an exceedingly great one it is—from Christians! The greater the feast, the greater the tribute that Christians pay the enemy, for what do we see on the festivals? Complete idleness, unbridled passions, brawls, profligacy, thefts, amusements. My God! What gratification of the flesh! What zealous service to the devil! Are these people really Christians, redeemed by the precious Blood of the Son of God? Are we living in Christian times or in pagan times? Are these men communicants of the Life-giving Mysteries? Are these the same people who frequent God's Church and pray to the Lord together with us? If they are, then for what purpose do they go to church? Evidently only from habit, and not from any

attachment of a thankful heart to Christ the Saviour. Evidently, they have not prayed to God; they have not drawn near to Him with their heart, but only with their lips—if they have even approached with their lips—and thus have not entered into the spirit of the feast. In general, they do not understand the nature and the purpose of Christian feasts and do not participate in them as children participate in their parent's family celebrations. How wicked are the children of our loving, good, and holy Mother, the Church! The Mother is holy, but the children are sinful; the Mother is spiritual, but the children are carnal; the Mother is heavenly, but the children are earthly. The Mother desires to give her children eternal, spiritual blessings, instead of corruptible and transitory ones; but the children reject them and choose for themselves earthly, sinful, passing pleasures. However, in addition to drunkards and people given over to various vices during feasts, we meet still more people who have never even been to church (and do not even know that it is a feast, because they have never even thought about it). For such people there is only one feast—the celebration of the flesh. Ah! How long will it be before we priests rise up against all the disorders that take place on the Lord's feasts? Which of God's priests will have the zeal of Elias, Phineas, Isaiah, or Jeremiah to rise up in the power of the Holy Spirit against all these disorders on the Lord's feasts in the new Israel, to dedicate all their strength and life for the glory of God, to uproot this moral laxity among Christians? Lord! When shall we duly keep holy Your festivals? When shall we comfort our holy Mother the Church by obeying her commandments? When shall we be imbued with her spirit? How often shall we begin celebrations of the great saving events of the Orthodox faith with the spirit, but end them with the flesh? How long shall the enemy mock the members of Christ, which Christians should be? How long shall men of other faiths and religions point at us and say: "Look, these are the Christians who call themselves Orthodox. Look how they live! What sort of faith can they have in their hearts? What knowledge of their religion can they have? What kind of priests must they have? How badly they must teach their own people the faith! How little can they explain to them the meaning of the feast, their significance, and the purpose for which they were instituted! How little do they teach them to live according to the faith!" My God! What a reproach to our Orthodox faith and to us pastors! And yet, perhaps, is not what they say of us pastors just? It is largely our fault that Christians do not spend the feasts as they should. We do not

unmask them; we do not forbid them; we do not implore them with all forbearance and instruction to spend the feasts—and in general to live—in a more Christian manner. We do not speak strongly enough against idleness, drunkenness, profligacy; we do not thunder in God's Church, with God's words, against these vices, which have taken such a terrible hold of Christians. We do not always exclude from the Holy Cup, as an example to others, those people who are known for their drunkenness and adultery, and thus we allow these contagious and abominable vices to spread further and further. Sometimes at confession we impose excessively lenient penances on those who deserve the severe punishment of the Church, and we do not follow as we should the fulfillment of even those penances that we lay upon them. O, Righteous God! Neither the pastors nor the flock can justify themselves before You. "*They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one*" (Rom 3:12). What will it come to at last with the existing disorder of our life? Iniquity spreads over the earth; the kingdom of the enemy grows wider. Your Kingdom diminishes; there are but few of Your chosen, in whose hearts You rest. Many are the slaves of the devil, in whose hearts the destroyer from time immemorial dwells like a thief. What will You do to us, O Lord? The blood of Your testament cries out from the earth, but the voice of Your Gospel does not penetrate into the hearts of Christians. Your commandments are neglected, the Church's ordinances are trampled underfoot. What will You do to us, O Lord? Lord! Send zealous workers into Your vineyard, who "*does not seek its own*" (1 Cor 13:5), but who seek You, O Christ. Give them the zeal of the prophets, the power and wisdom of the apostles, so that they might, day and night, unwearyingly labor in the fields of the hearts of men.

It is said that we soon grow weary of praying. What is the reason? We do not vividly see the Lord at our right hand (Psalm 15:8). Look upon Him unceasingly with the eyes of your heart, and then, even if you stand praying all night, you will not grow weary. What do I say—all night? You will be able to stand thus praying three days and three nights without growing weary. Remember the stylites. They stood for many years in a prayerful disposition of soul on pillars or columns and mastered their flesh, which was the same as yours, also inclined to slothfulness. And you feel oppressed by a few hours' communal prayers, even by one hour's prayers?

"*Charity thinks no evil*" (1 Cor 13:5). To think evil is the work of the devil; it is the devil in the person who makes him think evil. Therefore, have no evil thought in your heart against your neighbor, lest you become united with the devil. "*Overcome evil with good*" (Rom 12:21).—that is, the evil which you see or suspect. This is spiritual wisdom and the labor of Christian love.

"Our Father, Who art in heaven!" What an elevating, touching, soul-stirring sight it is when these words are pronounced from the depths of the soul, truthfully, with a united heart and mouth, either by a numerous congregation in church, or in the family circle, or in an assembly of schoolchildren, or in a company of soldiers! What an elevating sight it is when one sees that these words are realized in the people's very lives, when all of them have a feeling of brotherly love toward each other and live peaceably, the younger obeying the elder, the simpler obeying the wiser, each rendering the other his due, each esteeming the other, "*in honor giving preference to one another*" (Rom 12:10). What a truly heavenly sight it is when, before sitting down to table, the numerous members of a family with one heart and mouth say "Our Father," acknowledging the one Heavenly Father as the All-holy King, desiring the fulfillment of His will alone upon earth, recognizing Him alone as the Provider of all good things! What an elevating sight it is when the master of the household ascribes the blessings of food and drink not to himself, but to God, esteeming His gifts as common to all, when he makes himself equal with all others, as though he were a guest in his house, and not the host! But how much more striking and comforting a sight it would be if the whole earth, all peoples, "with one heart and mouth," were to exclaim: "Our Father, Who art in heaven! Hallowed be Thy name"—in us all! "Thy Kingdom come"—as it was in the beginning, before the Fall. "Thy Will be done"—Thy merciful and perfect Will, eternally as it is in heaven so also on the earth, and may no self-will reign! "Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts," and so on. How wonderful it would be if we all had such a way of thinking and desiring! But some day this will be, for the time will come when all those living upon the earth shall be one fold and have one Shepherd (John 10:16).

The minds of the angels cannot grasp and sufficiently marvel at the wisdom, mercy, and omnipotence that the Lord has revealed to us in His Incarnation from the Most-Holy Virgin Mary. "*All angelic nature wonders at this great act of Thine Incarnation, beholding the unapproachable God*

as an approachable man.”[9] Glory to Your mercy! Glory to Your generosity! Glory to Your wisdom! Glory to Your power! By His Incarnation the Lord has clearly taught us all the mysteries of faith, which were not known, or only little known, in the Old Testament. By His Incarnation we, accursed sinners, have been deemed worthy of the Communion of His Most-pure Body and Blood, and are united to Him in the closest manner. We dwell in Him and He in us. By His Incarnation the most-holy Virgin has become our all-powerful intercessor and our protection from sins, disasters, and misfortunes, praying for us day and night, our Queen and Lady, Whose power no visible and invisible enemies can withstand, our own Mother by grace, according to the words of Christ on the cross to His disciple St John: “*Behold Your Mother!*” and to Her: “*Behold Your son!*” (John 19:26, 27). Glory to Your munificence, Lord!

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How we debase our Godlike immortal soul by attaching ourselves to the perishable, evanescent, fleeting glitter of gold and silver, by averting our gaze from the higher, eternal, all-joyful light, or by attaching ourselves to corruptible sweetness that soon passes away and is harmful and debilitating to both soul and body, turning away our gaze from the eternal, spiritual sweetness, from the sweetness of the knowledge of God to vain earthly glory, turning away our eyes from the glory of the higher heavenly calling, the glory of being God’s children, the heirs of the eternal Kingdom of God. O, earthly vanity! O, attachment to worldly things! Look upward, Christian!

The greatest good of the present and the future life is God, eternally living, all-perfect, all-good. He who has acquired this good, he who has Him in his soul is the happiest of men. Everything else earthly, worldly, generally regarded as good, is vanity and emptiness. That which is around me or on me does not constitute myself. Even my flesh, with which I am clothed, and of which I am made, is only the earthly part of me; it is not my true self.

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What is signified by the words: “*whose praise is not from men but from God*” (Rom 2:29)? To whom is this praise given? To him who inwardly, in his heart, works for God, who does everything conscientiously and does not

care for the opinion of men or for human glory. But we seek the praise of men, not the praise of God, Who is the God of glory. We seek earthly rewards, crosses, and medals.

Why did the Holy Cross appear in the heavens to the Emperor Constantine? In order to show that our Lord Himself, as well as all the apostles and the entire army of martyrs, entered into glory through the cross, that the cross is invincible victory, that as the devil was vanquished by means of the cross, so all the enemies of the cross of Christ or Christians will be vanquished by the cross. Also it showed that the devil acts through the persecutors of the Christians and must be conquered by means of the cross. Persecuted Christians are members of Christ, soldiers of Christ, who are always under the protection of Christ the Lord and His cross.

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"*See, you have been made well. Sin no more*" (John 5:14). Experience proves that sins and passions destroy the health of both soul and body, while victory over the passions results in heavenly peace and health in soul and body. Conquer the many-headed hydra of sin, and you will be made whole. Preserve tranquility of spirit; do not be disturbed; do not be irritated by any opposition, offenses, negligence, injustice, and you will always enjoy spiritual and bodily health. Worries, anger, and the fire of passions produce in us a multitude of maladies, both mental and physical.

In order to rule others, we must first learn to rule ourselves. In order to teach others, we must first gather knowledge ourselves. If I do not know how to control myself, if there is in me no spirit of self-command, no spirit of meekness, holiness, love, or righteousness, then I am a bad leader. When all kinds of passions storm inside me, it is better for me not to undertake to rule others, to avoid doing greater harm than good, both to myself and others.

* * *

The Lord is life in my death, strength in my weakness, light in my darkness, joy in my sorrow, boldness in my faintheartedness, tranquility in my confusion, the answer to my prayer, glory in my dishonor, and deliverance from my dishonor. Wonderfully, mightily, and quickly does He protect and save me from misfortunes, distresses, and the seductions of the

passions. When I call upon Him to save me, the invisible enemies flee from me, after the evil they have wrought within me, and I vividly recognize the saving right hand of God, my Saviour, upon me. Glory and thanks to the Shepherd and Visitor of my soul!

* * *

When you stand in prayer, burdened with many sins and overpowered with despair, begin to pray with hope, with a burning spirit, and remind yourself that "*the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered!*" (Rom 8:26). When you remember with faith this action of the Spirit of God within us, tears of contrition will flow from your eyes; you will feel your soul overcome with peace, sweetness, justification, "*and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Rom 14:17); and you will cry in your heart, "Abba, Father!"

God's omnipresence is in space and thought. In other words, God is everywhere, both with respect to space and with respect to thought. Wherever I go, either in the body or in thought, everywhere I meet God, and everywhere God meets me.

* * *

When praying, we must believe in the power of the words of the prayer in such a way that we do not separate the words from the action expressed by them. We must believe that action will follow word, as the shadow follows the body, for the word and the action of the Lord are indivisible, "*He commanded, and they were created*" (Psalm 148:5). You must likewise believe that your prayerful petition will be answered. You have praised God, and God has received your praise. You have thanked God, and God has received your thanks as a spiritual fragrance. It is our misfortune that we have little faith, and we separate the word from its action, as the body from the soul, as form from content, as the shadow from the body. It is our calamity that during prayer, and in life, we are "*sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit*" (Jude 1:19); therefore, our prayers are fruitless.

"*My eyes and my heart will be there perpetually*" (1 Kings 9:3), God said of the Temple. "There" refers to the hearts of those in attendance and praying in church, for the Most High does not dwell in temples made with

hands. How comforting it is to read these words of the wise King Solomon! The eyes of the Master in God's temple are turned upon each of us; His heart is turned to each of us! Is it possible to demand greater intimacy? The Master's very heart is turned to me. Sometimes you stand face to face with another man and converse with him, but his heart is not turned toward you and is occupied with something else. But here God's heart is wholly turned to you, with all its love, all its mercy, according to your faith. He is ready to pour all His bounties upon you.

When we call upon the saints in prayer, if we utter their names from the heart, it already means that we bring them near our heart itself. Therefore, ask their prayers and intercession for yourself without doubting. They will hear you and will speedily lay your prayers before the Lord, in the twinkling of an eye, for He is omnipresent and omniscient. When, during the Rite of Preparation, you pray to the Lord Jesus Christ, or to His most-pure Mother and the saints, then the portion taken from the Bread represents the Lord, or His most-pure Mother, or some particular saint, or many saints together. When you commemorate the living or the departed, the portion taken in their name represents and replaces the soul of the person commemorated. Thus, in a small way, the beings of the higher and lower worlds are represented on our lips and in our hearts, and all this through faith, through the Holy Spirit, who alone is everywhere and fills all things.

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When praying, I firmly believe (1) that God alone is and fills everything, and that He is therefore at my right hand, (2) that I am His image, and (3) that He is an abyss of mercy, the Source of every mercy, and that He Himself has authorized me to pray to Him. In the same way as stones thrown upward inevitably fall down again either on the ground or into the water, depending on the direction of the throw, the words of prayer, if uttered with the whole heart, definitely reach the ears of God, but if they are uttered falsely, hypocritically, then they fall into the pit of vipers, the ocean of falsehood—the devil who is the essence of falsehood.

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The Lord fills all creation, which compared to Him is "*as a drop of the morning dew that falleth down upon the earth*" (Wis 11:22), as the smallest

blade of grass or as a grain of dust in His Right Hand. He is not limited either by the greatness or smallness of things created. He exists in infinity, entirely filling its emptiness, for He is the only One Who exists, and therefore calls Himself "*I Am Who I Am*" (Exod 3:14)—that is, "He Who is."

No matter how small an object is, as long as it exists, then the Lord, Who fills everything and upholds everything, must also exist, for how can it be possible that anything should exist, and not the Lord, Who created all things? It is absurd. Without Him, not a single grain of dust can have its being if left to itself, if deprived of God's presence and power. "*Without Him nothing was made that was made*" (John 1:3).

That our union with God in the future world will come to pass, that it will be for us the source of all light, peace, joy, and blessedness is partly recognized by experience, even in the present life. During prayer, when our soul is completely turned toward God and united to Him, we feel wonderful, calm, restful, and joyful, like children resting on their mother's breast. I would even say that we experience a state of inexpressible well-being. "*It is good for us to be here*" (Luke 9:33). Therefore, struggle unremittingly to obtain future everlasting bliss, the beginning of which you can experience even in the present life, but bear in mind that these beginnings are only earthly, imperfect, which we see now only "*in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known*" (1 Cor 13:12). How will it be with us then, when we shall indeed be most truly united to God, when the images and shadows shall pass away, and the kingdom of truth and vision will come? O! We must labor unceasingly all our life, until death, for future blessedness, for our future union with God.

You see how bright the sun and the stars are. "*Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun*" (Matt 13:43) with the inner, immaterial light of God. Whenever the angels appear on earth, they are almost always surrounded by light. Aspire to that enlightenment; throw aside the works of darkness. We can raise our nature to communion with the Divine Nature, for God is the uncreated Light, surpassing every created light.

Man! When I look at you, when I consider your earthly feelings and flesh, when I remember the day of your birth and the days of your childhood and growth that followed, and when I then think of the day of your death and the subsequent eternity that is destined for you from the foundation of the world, I do not know what is more amazing—your

nothingness or the omnipotence and goodness of the Creator who has mercifully given you life and will eventually clothe your corruptible and mortal body with immortality. My amazement increases when I see that the Lord God, the Eternal King, gives you His Own Flesh and Blood to partake of as "*in the days of His flesh.*" "*He Himself shared in the same*" (Heb 5:7; 2:14) in order to give you eternal life.

A dead person is a living being. "*For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to him*" (Luke 20:38). The soul invisibly hovers round the body and the places where it liked to dwell. If it died in sins, then it cannot free itself from their bonds and is in great need of the prayers of the living, especially the Church, that most-holy Bride of Christ. Therefore, let us pray earnestly for the dead. It is of great benefit to them, of more benefit than to the living.

When God looks mercifully at His creatures through the eyes of nature, through the eyes of bright, seasonable weather, everyone feels bright and joyful. When there is a seasonable breeze, there is wholesome air in all bodies and souls, but when a cold, damp, strong wind blows, then everyone feels oppressed in soul and body. Many creatures groan from diseases; many give themselves up to despondency and melancholy. So powerful and irresistible is the influence of nature upon mankind. However, it is remarkable that those who are less bound by carnal desires and passions, those who are less given up to gluttony, those who are more moderate in eating and drinking, are affected more pleasantly by nature and not oppressed by it (or at least not nearly as much as those who are the slaves of their nature and flesh). O! How clear it is that our life is in the Lord, and not in sensual things. How clear it is that the Lord is in everything, "*but is the same God who works all in all*" (1 Cor 12:6). In the air, He is our breath; in food, He is the satisfaction of our hunger; in drink, He is the quenching of our thirst; in clothing, He is our raiment; in habitation, He is our protection, warmth, and peace; in sleep, He is our rest; in pure, instructive, chaste, and edifying conversation, He is our speech; in mutual love, He is our love. Lord, Master, our Creator and Benefactor, grant that we may always remember You, at every moment of our life. Grant that through You "*we [may] live and move and have our being*" (Acts 17:28), and that we may have life, breath, and everything from You. But let us also remember that if in all these things we pervert God's laws, He becomes our grievous punishment. He will become our punishment even in the air, food, and

drink. He will no longer be the satisfaction of our hunger and the quenching of our thirst, but He will become our aversion to them or sickness, as happens when someone becomes ill after eating. In clothing or in habitation, He becomes our weakness and distress of mind. In sleep He becomes not rest, but uneasiness and fear. In speech, He becomes the stumbling of our tongue. In sinful love, He becomes the fiery torments. The sources of punishment usually are revealed in our sinful inclinations. "*So they might learn that one is punished, by the things by which he sins*" (Wis 11:16).

The truth and salvation of our holy faith are clearly revealed in the fact that not a single sacrament, not a single prayer uttered with faith is ever fruitless. Rather, they manifest their heavenly power in our very souls and bodies by cleansing our sins and giving peace to our souls, according to the promise of our Saviour: "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matt 11:28). They deliver us from spiritual afflictions and bodily sicknesses. No, we never pray in vain to the Lord, the most-holy Virgin, the angels, or the saints, but we receive all that we ask from them, as long as it is useful for our salvation. Powers of healing and all kinds of help constantly come to us from heaven. Our Lord is a Lord of many powers, which He manifests in us. Our God is the God of mercy and salvation. Similarly, the ever-Virgin Mother of the incarnate God the Word, imitating Her Son's love for mankind, prays for us and continually reveals Her mediation in Her help to the faithful. Feeling the continual all-saving powers revealed to us by the Mother of God, we call upon Her: "At no time will we unworthy ones be silent, God-bearing One, to tell of Thy mighty acts, for hadst thou not prayerfully interceded for us, who would have delivered us out of so many dangers?" "Show us Thy power, as Thou hast ever done." We turn to Her in every affliction, need, and misfortune. The same applies to the angels and saints—when we call upon them, they hear us, and by the grace of God they send us their help.

The carnal man does not understand the spiritual blessedness that proceeds from prayer and virtue, and he cannot comprehend even in a small degree what the blessedness in the next world will be. He does not know anything higher than earthly, carnal happiness, and he considers future blessings as imaginary visions. But the spiritual man knows the blessedness of the virtuous soul by experience, and he foretastes future eternal blessedness in his heart.

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The more a man leads a spiritual life, the more spiritual he becomes. He begins to see God in everything. He sees the manifestation of His power and might in everything. He sees himself always and everywhere abiding in God and depending on God, even in the most insignificant matters. But the more a man leads a carnal way of life, the more carnal he becomes. He does not see God in anything, not even in the most wonderful manifestations of His divine powers. He sees flesh and matter in everything, and nowhere, nor at any time, is God before his eyes (Psalm 35:2).

The Lord called Himself, and is, the good Shepherd (John 10:11). If you believe in His guidance, then you will understand with your heart that as a zealous shepherd does not allow his sheep to disperse while they graze, but gathers them together, so the Lord pastures our souls, not allowing them to wander in falsehood and sin, but gathering them on the path of virtue and not allowing the spiritual wolf to steal and scatter them.

Since the devil is simple in his being and can in an instant, merely with a thought, completely attach himself to us and enter into our heart, we must repulse him in an instant, with a single powerful word coming from our heart, containing all the force of truth as an antidote against the falsehood of the enemy. This is what the Lord meant when He said, "*Be wise as serpents*" (Matt 10:16). In other words, we must anticipate this spiritual serpent, who is quick and precise, attacking us with diabolical wisdom, always planning when it is easiest for him to attack and overthrow us, searching out our weakest sides and habits, then striking surely. But at the same time, the Lord said: "Be harmless as doves," that is, simple and guileless. Borrow from the serpent his wisdom only, but let your heart remain simple, pure, and uncorrupt. Be meek and humble as I am; do not give yourself up to wrath and irritability, for "*the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God*" (James 1:20). Keep yourself pure from all filthiness of flesh and spirit.

Since our soul is a spiritual, active being, it cannot remain idle—it either does good or evil, growing either wheat or tares. But since every good comes from God, and since the best way to obtain every good from God is prayer, then those who pray fervently, sincerely, from the depths of their hearts obtain from the Lord grace to do good and the grace of faith first and foremost. On the other hand, those who do not pray naturally remain

without these spiritual gifts, voluntarily depriving themselves of these gifts through their own negligence and spiritual coldness. Since the wheat of good thoughts, inclinations, intentions, and works grows in the hearts of those who labor and pray fervently to the Lord, the tares of every kind of evil grows in the hearts of those who do not pray, smothering the small amount of good remaining in them from the grace of baptism, chrismation, repentance, and communion. Therefore, we must most carefully watch over the field of our heart, lest the tares of evil, slothfulness, comfort, self-indulgence, unbelief, avarice, envy, hatred, and other sins begin to grow within it. We must daily weed the field of our heart, or at least during morning and evening prayers, refreshing it through salvific sighs and abundant tears, like an early and late rainfall. Other than this, we must do everything we can to implant the seeds of the virtues in the field of our heart—faith, hope in God, and love for God and our neighbor. We must fertilize it through prayer, patience, good works, and not for a single hour should we remain in complete idleness and inactivity, for in times of idleness and inactivity, the enemy zealously sows his tares. "*While men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way*" (Matt 13:25). We must also remember that it is impossible to do good works without effort. Ever since our voluntary falling into sin, the kingdom of God cannot be taken otherwise than by "*violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt 11:12). Why is it that only the narrow way and narrow gate lead to life? Who makes this chosen path so narrow? The world, the devil, and the flesh—these make our way into the kingdom of heaven narrow.

The Lord has brought my soul and body from nonexistence into existence. This is how almighty He is! How can I possibly not believe in His omnipotence? What can I consider impossible for Him, I who myself was brought from nonexistence into existence? What does God have that is higher and more precious in the world than man? Am I not the greatest miracle of His omnipotence? I am received by God Himself, into union with Him, I who am a little lower than the angels. Being united to Him through faith and purity of life, I can myself work the miracles of God's omnipotence. For example, I can raise the dead like Elias and the Apostles! If the spirits of angels and the souls of men are brought by Him from nonexistence into existence, then what animate or inanimate body could He not create? Furthermore, if God Himself has become human flesh and soul without ceasing to be God, if He has done that which would be impossible

for us to do, then what can be impossible for Him? What is more infinite than this wonder? Thus has our God indeed shown and shows His omnipotence.

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If the bodiless angels can assume a body (a real one, not a phantom), having received the ability to do this from God, then how easy must it be for the Lord Himself to create a body for Himself. It may even be said that the creative power is natural to every reasonable being, as a gift of God the Spirit, the Creator of everything. Therefore, shall not the Lord Himself, who has given such laws to nature, with immediate ease, simply by His command transform any substance into a body? Do not all bodies consist of formless, inanimate matter? What unbelieving person will, after this, doubt the possibility of the transformation, for instance, of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ during the Divine Liturgy? This is but an ordinary act of the God of wonders, especially after He created flesh for Himself of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.

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What can be stronger, more unchangeable, and mightier than the Word? By the Word was the world created and still exists: "*[He upholds] all things by the word of His power*" (Heb 1:3). Yet we sinners treat words so lightly, so negligently. For what do we show less respect than for the word? What is more changeable in us than the word? O, how accursed we are! How inattentive we are to such precious things! We do not remember that through a word proceeding from a believing and loving heart, one may perform life-giving miracles for our own souls and for the souls of others (e.g., in prayer at divine service, in sermons, at the celebration of the Holy Mysteries). Oh, Christian! Value every word! Be attentive to every word! Be firm in your word! Trust in every word of God and the saints, since they are the words of life. Remember that the word is the beginning of life.

We must also have the deepest respect for the word, because in a single word dwells the omnipresent one indivisible Lord, who fills all things. Therefore, it is said, "*You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain*" (Exod 20:7), for the Lord Himself, simple Being, the everlastingly worshipped Unity, is present in His name.

When the Lord strikes you with powerful sorrow, sickness, or misfortune, then be assured that He will also truly send you consolation, and He will afterward bestow upon you the grace of peace, strength, and joy corresponding to your previous sufferings. For "*the Lord is compassionate and merciful, long-suffering, and of great Kindness. He will not always be chiding, neither keep He His anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our wickedness*" (Psalm 102:8–10).

As you look at the Saviour's cross, contemplate Love, crucified for our salvation, and think of the blessedness He has prepared for us, and from what torments He has redeemed us! He has snatched us from the very jaws of the beast and has brought us to the Father! O love! O redemption! O terrors of everlasting torments! O indescribable, endless blessedness!

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When we say "Our Father," we should believe and remember that the Heavenly Father never forgets and never will forget us, for what good earthly father forgets and does not care for his children? "*Yet I will not forget you*" (Isa 49:15), says the Lord. "*For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things*" (Matt 6:32). Take these words to heart. Remember that the Heavenly Father continually surrounds you with love and care, and He is not called your Father without reason. "Father" is not an empty name without meaning and power, but a name full of meaning and power.

When you are saying your prayers, especially from a prayer book, do not hurry from one word to another without feeling its truth, without allowing it to resonate in your heart, but always strive to feel with your heart the truth of the words you utter. Your heart will oppose this, sometimes through slothfulness and stony insensibility, sometimes through doubt and lack of faith, sometimes through a kind of inward fire and oppression, sometimes through distraction and deviation of the mind to earthly objects and cares, sometimes through the remembrance of the offenses of your neighbors and a feeling of revenge and hatred for them, sometimes through vivid images of worldly pleasures or images derived from reading novels and worldly books in general. Do not be self-loving. Conquer your heart and offer it to God as an acceptable sacrifice: "*My son, give Me your heart*" (Proverbs 23:26), and your prayer will unite you to God and all heaven, and you will

be filled with the Spirit and the fruits of the Spirit—righteousness, peace, joy, love, meekness, long-suffering, and heartfelt compunction. Do you want to finish your prayer rule quickly to give rest to your weary body? Pray fervently and you will sleep the most peaceful, quiet, and healthy sleep. Do not hurry or say your prayers haphazardly; with half an hour's prayer you will have gained three whole hours of the soundest sleep. Are you rushing to work? Get up earlier and do not oversleep; instead, pray fervently, and you will thus obtain tranquility, energy, and success in your work for the whole day. Is your heart impatiently rushing to vain, worldly matters? Master it! Let its treasure be not earthly vanity, but God. Teach your ears to attach themselves through prayer to God, not to worldly vanity, so that you may not be shamed in the day of sickness, in the hour of death, like the rich man who was rich in worldly vanity and poor in faith, hope, and love. If you do not pray as I have said, then you will prosper neither in life, nor in faith, nor in spiritual wisdom.

The Lord Jesus Christ had no place to lay His head during His earthly life (Matt 8:20), yet He contained within Himself His own life and the life of all (John 3:36; 5:26; 11:25; 14:6). On the other hand, rich men build themselves magnificent palaces and live in them; but, despite their brilliant surroundings, they do not have true life in their hearts. They cannot even enjoy their vanity; they feel dull and oppressed in their beautiful palaces, so that many rich men and high dignitaries would willingly exchange their palaces for the poor man's cottage, if only they could only acquire his peace of heart.

In order to be perfectly pleasing to God, we must for His sake be perfectly indifferent to our body. For instance, when we overcome our slothfulness and strong inclination to sleep during prayer, forcing ourselves not to yield to our tiredness, then we are indifferent to our body. The martyrs and ascetics had this perfect dispassion.

* * *

At the end of your morning and evening prayers at home, pray to the saints: patriarchs, prophets, apostles, hierarchs, martyrs, confessors, holy fathers, ascetics, unmercenaries. Since you see in them the realization of every virtue, you may yourself become the imitator of their virtue. Learn childlike faith and obedience to the Lord from the patriarchs. Learn

eagerness for God's glory and for the salvation of souls from the prophet and apostles. Acquire zeal to preach God's word and in general to use the Scriptures for the glory of God's name from the example of the hierarchs. Learn from the hierarchs also how to inspire faith, hope, and love among the flock. Learn firmness in the faith and piety before unbelieving and godless people from the martyrs and confessors. Learn to crucify your own flesh, with its passions and desires, to pray and think piously from the ascetics. Learn from the unmercenaries how to disdain profit and how to give help to the needy, without expecting any return.

* * *

Do not neglect to uproot the tares of sin from the hearts of children—impure, evil, and blasphemous thoughts; sinful habits, inclinations, and passions. The enemy and the sinful flesh do not spare even children. The seeds of all sins are found in children as well. Help them see all the dangers of sin on the path of life. Do not hide sins from them, lest through ignorance and lack of wisdom they should become attracted to sinful habits and desires that grow stronger and stronger. These children will harvest the fruit of sin when they grow up.

* * *

The carnal man's entire life and occupations have a carnal tendency and carnal purpose—his prayer is carnal, his learning and his teaching are carnal, his writings are carnal. Everywhere he goes, every word he speaks reveals his carnal way of life. The carnal life manifests itself especially in everything relating to the man's appetites. This is the throne of the carnal man. However, as soon as the carnal man, through God's grace, lays aside the carnal life, he begins to trample his carnal appetites underfoot. He alters his manner of eating; he ceases to live for his appetites alone. Gradually, faith, hope, and love begin to reign in his heart. Instead of wasting his time on eating, drinking, fancy clothes, and riches, he thinks of God, the soul, eternal life, eternal torment. Instead of exercising his former love of money, food, drink, clothes, and luxurious furnishings, he begins to contemplate love for God and mankind, longing to dwell with the angels and saints. Instead of satiating himself with food and drink, now he labors in hunger and thirst and the diligent reading and hearing of the Word of God and

divine services. Previously, his enemies were those who hindered his external well-being, but now he bears privations with equanimity. Previously, he slept much and found pleasure in sleep, but now he sleeps little and intentionally deprives himself of sweet sleep. Previously, he gratified his flesh in every way, now he mortifies it, lest it rebel against the spirit.

* * *

When you see that anyone, through the efforts of the devil, is wholly possessed with a single vain, earthly subject (*idée fixe*), deeply grieves about it, constantly speaks of it, and thereby vexes you, do not become irritated, but be firmly assured that it is a spiritual malady coming from the enemy. Instead, be gentle and kind to the sick man, and immediately turn with calm, serene faith to God in prayer, uttering the following words to the Holy Icon not Made with Hands: "To Thy most-pure icon we bow down, O Good One, praying for forgiveness of our sins, Christ our God; for of Thine own will Thou didst condescend to ascend the cross in flesh, and thereby to deliver Thy creatures from the yoke of the enemy. Therefore, we thankfully cry unto Thee: Thou, Our Saviour, hast filled all things with joy, Thou Who desirest to save the world."[10]

Be vigilant to yourself! The enemy sometimes tests your patience; his triumph is twice as great if he succeeds in irritating you as well. Understand his wiles and laugh at them. When a person dear to your heart is attacked, your heart naturally aches to hear him speak words revealing his heart's attachment to something earthly. But do not be depressed, do not despair, do not grieve, do not give way to anger, "*considering yourself lest you also be tempted*" (Gal 6:1). Pray to the Saviour, "Saviour, save us!" Do not betray the Lord when you are in spiritual sorrow or during an attack of the devil and the passions. Remember that Lord Himself said, "*And call upon Me in the day of thy trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me*" (Psalm 49:15). The infinite power of the Lord is ever ready to come to our help. It is pleasing to the Lord of power and mercy to manifest His saving power in us and to save us from our visible and invisible enemies. The more trivial is the cause for a person's inner sorrow, the more wretched and deserving of compassion he is, for then we clearly see that the cause of it is the devil.

It is never so difficult to say from the heart, “Thy Will be done, Father,” as when we are suffering from sorrow or grievous sickness, especially when we are subjected to injustice or the assaults and snares of the enemy. It is also difficult to say from the heart “Thy Will be done” when we ourselves are the cause of some misfortune, for then we think that it is not God’s will, but our own, that has placed us in such a position, although nothing can happen without the will of God. In general, it is difficult to sincerely believe that it is the will of God that we should suffer, when the heart knows both through faith and experience that God is our blessedness. Therefore it is difficult to say during misfortunes, “Thy Will be done.” We think, “Is it possible that this is the will of God? Why does God torment us? Why are others quiet and happy? What have we done? Will there be an end to our torments?” And so on. But when it is difficult for our corrupt nature to acknowledge the will of God over us—the will of God without which nothing happens—and to humbly submit to it, that is the very time for us to humbly submit to His will and to offer our most precious sacrifice to the Lord—our heartfelt devotion, not only in ease and happiness, but also in suffering and misfortune. It is then that we must submit our vain, false wisdom to the perfect Wisdom of God, for our thoughts are as far from the thoughts of God “*as the heavens are higher than the earth*” (Isa 55:8, 9). Let every person bring his Isaac, his only begotten, his beloved, his promised one—to whom peace and blessedness, not sufferings, are promised—in sacrifice to God, and let him show God his faith and his obedience, in order to become worthy of God’s gifts, which he already enjoys, or which he hopes to enjoy.

In order to correctly understand these words of the Lord’s prayer: “lead us not into temptation,” we must remember that this prayer was given to the Apostles, who asked the Lord to teach them how to pray. It was given to them before the descent of the Holy Spirit, when Satan demanded that the Lord give them to him, so he might sift them as wheat (Luke 22:31). At that time, the Apostles were still weak, and they might have fallen under temptation (like Peter). This is why the Saviour puts these words into their moths: “Lead us not into temptation.” But it is impossible to live without being tempted (i.e., tested) in our faith, hope, and love. It is indispensable for every person to have the secrets of his heart brought out to the open, so that he may see what he is and amend himself. Yes, temptations are necessary so “*that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed*” (Luke

2:35), so that our firmness or weakness in faith may be revealed, as well as the knowledge or ignorance, the depravity or purity of our heart, its hope and trust in God or in earthly things. They test us to see whether we love ourselves and corruptible things or God above all.

When I remember the Son of God Who accepted the union of human nature with His divinity, and when I look at the lives of those who call themselves Christians, I am seized with fear and pity. Fear, because I anticipate the terrible wrath of God upon the careless, ungrateful, and evil-natured. Pity, because I see a great multitude of Christians voluntarily depriving themselves of the indescribable bliss of the future life and willingly casting themselves into eternal fire, into eternal torments.

* * *

Give every possible honor to every person, especially to the Christian, because God deigned to receive human nature into most intimate union with His divinity, becoming God-man. Therefore, when you look at any person, think, "The Lord Himself was in every respect similar to this man, excepting sin," and if you know, or see, that he does not know this truth of the Incarnation of the Son of God, and is leading an unworthy life, then teach and guide him. Also love every man as you love yourself, because he is another you, and he is therefore called your neighbor in God's commandments: "*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor*" (Exod 20:16).

The carnal man considers the Christian's freedom as slavery. He fears attending divine services; he fears fasting and preparing for communion; he fears confession, communion, all the sacraments, and he does not know that all this is a requirement of his nature, a necessity for his spirit.

* * *

When people speak of any particular person's virtues, a proud man becomes afraid, lest this person should be found superior to him in virtues and should eclipse him, for the proud man considers himself above all and does not think it possible to find similar or higher virtues in others. The rivalry of others is a great misfortune for him.

* * *

When you are praying for all mankind, but not praying with your whole heart, then your soul is heavy, for God does not favor such prayer. But as soon as you begin to pray for all people with your whole heart, then you will immediately feel relieved, for the Lord listens mercifully to such prayers.

* * *

The devil often grabs hold of our heart with his teeth. What teeth? Lack of faith, doubt, inner heaviness, and every passion. Sometimes the enemy troubles us with suspicions regarding the honesty of our servants with respect to our property, and this happens most often when our hearts should be occupied exclusively with thoughts of God and the contemplation of heavenly things. In order to deliver yourself from such anxieties and thoughts, which come from the devil, remember these words of the Holy Scripture: "*The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing*" (Phil 4:5, 6). Do not be uselessly anxious. The Lord takes care of your property; you are not at home, but He is there for you, for He is everywhere present and fills all things. He speaks to the consciences of your servants and the members of your household. He tests the thoughts of their hearts at every time and every hour. He says to them inwardly, "Thou shalt not steal," and He disturbs their hearts with fear and apprehension when they conceive the sinful intention of stealing anything. He will manifest His miraculous power over them and will not allow them to steal. Moreover, you must learn to regard all earthly things as rubbish and disdain them.

The Word is our Creator and our God. Every word of His is truth and action. Our own word should be the same, for we are created in the image of God. Likewise, the word of all speaking creatures should be truth and action (such as the word of good tidings of the Archangel to Zacharias and to the Virgin Mary), and thus it is also with the angels and saints, but in the devil, who fell away from God, only a shadow of thought remains, and his word is without truth, without the reality of the action—a lie, a phantom. In the same way as a truthful word is life, being an image of God the Word, and being derived from Him, a false word of the devil, being his image, is death. Falsehood is necessarily death, for the death of the soul is naturally caused by that which has itself fallen from life into death.

* * *

One cannot eat and drink and smoke continually. One cannot turn human life into constant eating, drinking, and smoking (although there are men who do eat, drink, and smoke almost uninterruptedly). The spirit of evil has turned life into smoking; it has made the mouth, which should be employed in thanking and praising the Lord, into a smoking furnace. The less you eat and drink, and the lighter your food is, the lighter and more refined your spirit will become.

* * *

O ye of little faith! Do not doubt My omnipotence. I have created every soul and all flesh, and I am the God of spirits and of all flesh. "*For the spirit would fail before Me, And the souls which I have made*" (Isa 57:16). "*I have made the earth, And created man on it; I—My hands—stretched out the heavens, And all their host I have commanded*" (Isa 45:12).

"Thou shalt not murder." Incidentally, doctors murder a sick person through their ignorance when they prescribe him harmful medicines. They also commit murder, those who will not have a doctor attend them or another person who is ill and requires the doctor's help. They commit murder, those who disturb a sick man to whom any disturbance may be fatal (e.g., a consumptive). They commit murder, those who do not give a sick person a doctor's help or do not give food to the hungry because of greed or any other sinful motivation.

* * *

Sometimes one encounters people with perverted hearts. At the celebration of the sacraments they are full of unbelief and insensibility, moral powerlessness. They are sick with mockery, inner disorder, and diabolical fear! During the illness of those near to them, one is also struck by their insensibility and their even devilish pleasure in the misery of their neighbor. They consider their sick brother as superfluous in the world, and they inwardly think that there will be more room for them if he dies, forgetting that every person—including they—will perhaps die tomorrow, not pitying the sufferer in their hearts as their own member.

* * *

When an irritable and imprudent man tries to use a certain object but is not able to use it due to his lack of acumen, and, seeing that the object does not do what he wants, he often grows angry, loses his temper, throws it aside and sometimes breaks this object, as though it were an animate, intelligent being intentionally resisting his wishes. It sometimes happens that something falls down or gets caught in something else, which tears. Perhaps an object does not move in the manner desired, or it does not fit into its right place. Everything seems to be taking up arms against the man, and he is ready to weep from vexation. But if a master took the tool, then everything would have gone right. Why is this? Because then a man possessing intelligence, judgment, and acumen would have set to the work with his entire soul. Where does this observation of ordinary worldly behavior with respect to different objects lead me? To what thoughts? I see that the intellect, the intelligent human spirit, reigns everywhere over matter, and without the intellect nothing can be done by itself, not even normal motion. Equally, without the intellect, nothing can adapt itself to any particular purpose or attain any particular purpose, for every purpose is accomplished by means of certain determined laws, and the laws proceed from the intellect. Now let us turn to the universe. Where does this wonderful order in inanimate matter and in irrational animals originate? What is the source of this beauty, this miraculous transformation of formless and lifeless matter into beautiful living things? Whence this adaptation to thousands of different purposes and such wise employment of objects to a desired end, objects which by themselves have no connection to the desired end? Who is this invisible Sovereign over matter? Who is this Mind, revealing His most wonderful wisdom in matter and in various animate creatures? Who is this eternal Artist and Architect, invisibly producing His art before our eyes? He Who alone is the Creator of all—the Lord! I contemplate You with the eyes of my heart in every minute particle of space. You, together with your Son and Your Holy Spirit, invisibly do all things. I embrace You, present in every place, with my heart. I worship You, I glorify You, and I praise You!

* * *

Those who give bread or money to the hungry unwillingly, with a scornful glance and dissatisfied heart, are doing the same thing as if they were putting poison into bread or alms of the poor, though this poison is a spiritual, invisible one. We must give with love, with respect for the humanity of our neighbor, willingly, gladly. It is natural that love should rejoice when giving help to a beloved one.

* * *

God preserve you from grudging the sacrifice of your material possessions to the Lord Himself, to His most-pure Mother, or to any other of God's saints, thereby preferring matter to the spirit. Beware lest your property lead to your destruction. You must firmly believe that instead of corruptible blessings, the Lord or His saints will bestow incorruptible ones upon you; instead of temporal blessings, eternal ones, such as spiritual light, forgiveness of sins; gifts of living faith, firm hope, and love unfeigned; peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. These are infinitely greater than any material gifts. Lavish your possessions joyfully on the Lord and His saints as a willing sacrifice. If you send money for this purpose through anyone else's hands, be sure that it will reach its destination, and if people steal your sacrifice to the Lord, then the Lord your God will call such people to account. Not a single mite will be lost, but instead your sacrifice will bring you a gift in proportion to your faith and heart's disposition from the Lord, Who is the God of all gifts, especially to those who offer Him their heartfelt sacrifices.

* * *

We imagine the inner spiritual work of God's saints to be attentiveness to their secret Guest, the Lord, Who works within them. They worship Him, smiling from inward sweetness and tenderness, enjoying heavenly consolation. You "*have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls*" (1 Pet 2:25).

God created matter so that it would change and be transformed in various ways, depending on the Creator's thought. The purpose of matter is to manifest His omnipotence and mercy to His creation in various ways, that He may act beneficially through it on living creatures, and especially on those who are reasonable and clothed with flesh.

* * *

Worthless is the charity of the man who bestows it unwillingly, because his money is not his gift, but God's, and his sole gift is the disposition of his heart. This is why charity often proves nearly worthless, for it was bestowed unwillingly, grudgingly, without respect for the humanity of the poor man. In the same way, the hospitality of many people proves worthless, because of their hypocritical, vainglorious behavior to their guests. Let us offer our sacrifices on the altar of love for our neighbor with heartfelt affection, "*for God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Cor 9:7).

Incidentally, the enemy acts destructively on certain men's hearts through nature, as he did to Job: using wind, water, and fire. Houses are sometimes burnt down through the wiles of the enemy; houses are submerged and ships sink; winds blow down and destroy buildings. Sometimes, in damp, wet weather, the enemy uses his craft to oppress our inner being with heaviness, striking us with an apathetic coldness to everything true and holy. O, how many different snares are used by the prince of the powers of the air, and how difficult it is sometimes to recognize them!

* * *

Corrupted mankind continually desires to eat and drink, to satisfy his sight, hearing, smell, and touch. Carnal people satisfy themselves with elegant food and drink, entertainments, music, smoking, magnificent buildings, and external splendor. But the adornment of holy objects raises our souls to God and is therefore not only sinless, but holy and edifying, as are sacred chant, the fragrance of incense, the magnificence and splendor of the ornaments of the church and all its vessels. All these, destined to serve the glory of God and to arouse pious feelings, are not sinful, but holy. But there, in the world, everything ministers to the carnal, corrupted man, and estranges people from God. The corrupt heart seeks impure, carnal sensations, and everything there satisfies them. The corrupt mind seeks knowledge corresponding to its corruption, and it is satisfied. The corrupt imagination and memory also seek images corresponding to them, and they are satisfied. But we Christians are "*new creature[s]*" (2 Cor 5:17), or "*a chosen generation*" (1 Pet 2:9), a new people "*created according to God, in*

true righteousness and holiness" (Eph 4:24). We must divest ourselves of the old man and his works and fight against his desires and lusts.

When you are reading a long rule of prayer aloud in the presence of a large congregation of people, sometimes the enemy brings disorder to your heart and tries to stop your words with the thought that the people will not understand so many words, and that it is a useless waste of time to read such prayers. Obviously, this is stupidity. Have we forgotten the Holy Spirit, the Instructor in all truth? Does He remain inactive, does He stop enlightening all human hearts? Have you not yourself experienced the enlightenment of your heart by the Holy Spirit? Formerly you did not understand some of the words and expressions, and then suddenly the Holy Spirit opened your mind so that you might understand these previously incomprehensible words and expressions. What a light suddenly enlightens your heart at that moment! Be assured that the same also happens with others. Read with a steadfast heart, without any unhealthy thoughts. Sow the seed, and God will take care of the growth.

* * *

There are many different obstacles on the narrow path. You wish to pray, and the enemy oppresses you both spiritually and physically. You feel it your duty to write a sermon, and you are oppressed by slothfulness—oppression is everywhere. The smoke of hell endeavors to darken and constrain your soul even when the Most-holy and awe-inspiring Sacrifice lies before you, when you commune, and also during the celebration of any of the sacraments. The greater the rite, the more violently and furiously the enemy attacks you.

* * *

God is goodness, like inexhaustible myrrh. The spiritual world is the extension of this goodness, like an ocean of fragrant myrrh, as is the material world also. How can we not hope to obtain all good things from such goodness? The Lord in His goodness has infused Himself into all creatures, like myrrh, but Himself is in no way emptied.

* * *

At the approach of the great feasts, you must be especially watchful over yourself. The enemy endeavors beforehand to harden the heart to the subject of the event celebrated, to prevent Christians honoring it with the heartfelt contemplation of its meaning. He acts on us either through the weather, or through food and drink, or through his fiery arrows, shot at the heart in great profusion and setting the entire man on fire. In addition, evil, impure, and blasphemous thoughts occur to our minds, and we feel complete aversion to the subject of the feast. We must overcome the enemy by forcing ourselves to devout contemplation and prayer.

* * *

During prayer, when the enemy inflames in you a strong desire for food, despise this material, nervous irritation. Strengthen your heart more powerfully through prayer and inflame it through faith and love. Speak to the tempter in the words of the Lord, "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Matt 4:4). Prayer is my best food, fortifying and enlightening both the soul and the body.

* * *

Sometimes the enemy acts through evil people. Through the proud, he sows humiliation and contempt. Through atheists, he spreads unbelief, freethinking, and mockery of sacred things. Through cruel masters, he tyrannizes and torments. Through gluttons, he allures to indulgence, overeating, and drunkenness (not without the help of our own flesh). Through the profligate, he inclines to depravity or loss of chastity. Through thieves, he steals our property. He afflicts us also through those that hate and envy us by depriving us of food, clothes, and homes. Through all people and all things earthly, by God's permission, the "*ruler of this world*" (John 16:11), the prince of the powers of the air, the "*rulers of the darkness of this age*" (Eph 6:12) exasperates mankind and tries to attract them to his side, making use of various seductions and attacks for this purpose. If the All-wise, All-merciful, and Almighty Heavenly Father did not watch unwearyingly over us and turn to good the innumerable wiles of the tempter, if we ourselves were not watchful, the bodiless evildoer would have long ago subdued the world to himself, and on the earth no holy seed would have remained, even as a root of future righteousness (Isa 6:13).

When a man is about to pray, he must humble his proud heart and cast away earthly vanity from it, and he must bring into it living and undoubting faith.

* * *

When the carnal man is at ease and happy, the spiritual man feels oppressed. When the outer man flourishes, the inner man perishes. This is how antagonistic are our sinful, carnal old man and our new man, renewed by Christ's grace. This is why the Apostle Paul said, "*though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day*" (2 Cor 4:16). And we often experience this ourselves. Therefore, the true Christian should long for outward, physical, earthly sufferings, for they strengthen his spirit. He must not even think of complaining. How can he complain at that which is profitable to his immortal soul, although the means by which this is accomplished are repugnant to his outward man? Illnesses, fires, robbery, poverty, misfortunes, wars, and famine often act beneficially upon the soul.

Since God is Life, and diseases are a deviation from life, the mere touch of the Source of Life cures us. This is why the Saviour, Who is the Life of all, cured and still cures people through His touch alone. The same occurs with any contagious object—at the will or the word of the Creator and Founder of everything, they become harmless (air, water, plants, and animals).

* * *

Sometimes, together with sorrow and heaviness in the heart, we feel a new temptation—a hardness, numbness, and insensibility of the heart to everything true, good, and holy. We feel like a stone or a block, without faith, without the capability of praying, without hope in God's mercy, without love. How sad it is to feel like a stone or a log, with no faith or love, when we were created to believe, feel, hope, and love! We must bear this patiently and pray to God to roll away the stone of insensibility from the doors of the tomb of our heart. We must ask Him to take away from us this heart of stone and give us a heart of flesh. But what does this hardness or numbness in us signify? It shows the presence of the devil in our heart, who, having forcibly taken possession of our heart through our lack of faith, thrusts out from it every good thought, not allowing it to rest there. He then

destroys all faith and every good feeling, making the man a burden even to himself. This truly does happen to men. Let them know what this means.

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The many different ways we can serve our king and country are an image of our most important service to the King of Heaven, which must continue eternally. Him we must truly serve before all, as His faithful servants, because He created us, redeemed us, and provides for us through His providence. Do our countrymen think of this? But we must think of it. Earthly service is a test, a preparation for heavenly service: "*you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things*" (Matt 25:21).

Do not be merciless judges of those who labor in service to God, but whose way of life contradicts their calling and piety; they are placed in contradiction to themselves by the devil, their wicked adversary. He seizes their heart with his teeth, forcing them to do things they do not want to.

* * *

Do not only do your work when you want to, but do it especially when you do not want to. Understand that this applies to every ordinary worldly matter, as well as (or perhaps, especially) to the work of the salvation of your soul—prayer, reading God's word and other salutary books, attending divine services, doing good works (whatever they may be), preaching God's word. Do not obey the slothful, deceitful, and sinful flesh—it is eternally ready to rest and lead us into everlasting destruction through temporal calm and pleasure. "*In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread*" (Gen 3:19). O miserable soul, "*carefully cultivate the talent granted unto thee,*"[11] sings the Church. "*The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt 11:12). says our Lord and Saviour.

When your heart is disturbed by any passion, and you are deprived of peace and filled with agitation, and words of displeasure and animosity against your neighbor fall from your tongue, do not linger in this condition, so destructive to you, but immediately bend your knees and confess your sin before the Holy Spirit. Say from the depths of your heart, "I have offended You, Holy Spirit, by the spirit of my passion, by the spirit of evil and disobedience to You." Afterward, from your whole heart and with the

feeling of the omnipresence of the Spirit of God, speak the prayer to the Holy Spirit: “O Heavenly King, Comforter, Spirit of Truth, Who art everywhere present and fillest all things, Treasury of good things and Giver of Life, come and dwell in me and cleanse me from all impurity, and save, O Good One, my passionate and sensual soul.” Then your heart will be filled with humility, peace, and devotion. Remember that by every sin, by every attachment to anything earthly, by every displeasure and animosity toward your neighbor, by anything carnal, you offend the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of peace and love, the Spirit Who draws us from the earthly to the heavenly, from the visible to the invisible, from the corruptible to the incorruptible, from the temporal to the eternal, from sin to holiness, from vice to virtue. O All Holy Spirit, our Ruler, our Instructor, our Comforter! Preserve us through Your power, O Holiness of the Father! O Spirit of our Heavenly Father, implant in us, nurture in us the Father’s Spirit, so that we may be His true children in Jesus Christ our Lord.

* * *

When you are praying, be careful to make sure that not only your outward man prays, but your inward man also. Though you are sinful beyond measure, still pray. Do not heed the devil’s provocation, craftiness, and despair, but overcome and conquer his wiles. Remember the abyss of the Saviour’s mercy and His love for mankind. The devil will represent the Lord’s face to you as terrible and unmerciful, rejecting your prayer and repentance, but remember the Saviour’s own words, full of every hope and boldness: “*and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out*” (John 6:37), and “*come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden*” with sins, iniquities, and the wiles and attacks of the devil, “and I will give you rest” (Matt 11:28).

O Man! The Creator’s omnipotence, wisdom, and mercy, which were poured out on the visible and invisible world, are ready to be bestowed, in all their infinity, on you also, if you endeavor to be a true child of the Heavenly Father, if you fulfill His commandments to love God and your neighbor. Fight the good fight with all your strength, without flagging.

* * *

Every person that does any evil, that gratifies any passion, is sufficiently punished by the evil he has committed and by the passion he serves, chiefly because he withdraws from God and God withdraws from him. It would therefore be insane and inhuman to hold a grudge against such a man. It is no different than drowning a sinking man or pushing a person already being devoured by flame further into the fire. To such a man, since he is in danger of perishing, we must show especial love, and we must pray fervently to God for him, neither judging him, nor rejoicing at his misfortune.

* * *

Instead of proving its validity (since it has none), sin acts through violence, by wounding, by stinging us inwardly, by pouring into us its burning poison. Blessed is he who despises all earthly things and who is wounded instead by the love of God, by heavenly love. But how few such men there are among the fallen sons of Adam! Who is not wounded and struck by the arrows of sensuality, avarice, and the desire to be praised? And, *vice versa*, who is pierced by the arrows of true love for God and his neighbor? The arrows of the passions and sensual pleasures have driven out the arrows of God's love, leaving no room for them. For some people, these two principles are daily fighting each other, each thrusting the other out, while in others, there is not even a struggle. Earthly arrows master some people completely, stifling the heavenly ones. Such is the case with those who are greedy, sensual, ambitious, drunkards, deceivers, murderers, fornicators, adulterers, etc. O, when will our hearts be wholly afire with love for the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for the Life-giving, Tri-hypostatic God Who has commanded us to keep His commandments?

* * *

Why do we trouble and torment ourselves at not receiving or losing some expected treasure? Because that which we expected or which we have lost was the idol of our heart, and our heart has withdrawn from the Lord, the Source of living water, Who alone can fill and give peace to the heart. Let us cling to God with our whole heart, and no earthly loss, no unfulfilled expectation of any earthly good (i.e., money, awards, and other external and perishable things) will grieve us. Let us learn to live an inward life. Let us

turn our thoughts to the highest blessings, to the heavenly recompense that is alone desirable, true, and makes those who obtain it truly happy.

* * *

We are generally delighted at fine, bright, warm weather and like to talk about it, but in the heavenly abodes of the angels and saints the brightness, seasonableness, and freshness are incomparably greater. Why, then, do we not care to speak of those dwellings, that life, that brightness, that blessedness? Joyful, life-giving, and bright is the sun, but the light of God's countenance, in which the angels and the souls of the righteous rejoice, is even more joyful, life-giving, and bright. "*Make us to be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting. O Lord, save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance. Govern them and lift them up for ever.*"[12]

* * *

Fervent, tearful prayer not only cleanses from sins, but also cures bodily infirmities and diseases. It renews the whole of a man's being and makes him, so to speak, born again (I speak from experience). O what a priceless gift prayer is! Glory to You, O Only-begotten Son of God, Who hast obtained for us through Thy mediation the endless pardon of our sins! Glory to the All-Holy Spirit, Who "*makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*" (Rom 8:26), Who gives us ardent prayer with groaning and tears, Who warms our cold souls and gives contrition and sorrow for sins, cleansing, sanctifying, consoling, strengthening, and renewing us! Glory to You, O Holy Trinity without beginning, the Giver of Life, eternally glorified by all reasonable creatures!

It is impossible to receive more than everything God has already bestowed on you, for He has given you Himself, His flesh and blood united with His divinity. He has made you His child (Rom 8:16), when before you were the child of wrath (Eph 2:3) and accursed. He has given you everything you need and external blessings in abundance, and if He has not given you more external blessings, it is because they would be harmful to you, soul and body. If you are now often harmed by these external blessings by attaching yourself to them, and if you suffer misfortunes and injuries from the passions by falling away from the love of God and your neighbor, by not aspiring to higher things and instead descending to the lower ones,

then what would happen if you had still more of these blessings? You would sink totally into sensuality.

With fervent prayer, we can obtain all spiritual blessings from the all-merciful and all-bestowing God, as well as the indispensable earthly good things, but only if our prayer is fervent and the desire to obtain these blessings is sincere. And what prayers the Church puts into our mouths! With such prayers, we can easily incline the Lord to be merciful to us and to give us every good gift. The enemy, knowing God's goodness and the power of prayer, tries to deter us from it any way he can, or tries to distract our minds during prayer, or strives to hinder us through various passions and attachments to earthly things, or endeavors to hurry us, disturb us, etc.

* * *

When the heart is occupied with worldly things, especially superfluous ones, it forsakes the Lord—the Source of life and peace—and is therefore deprived of life and tranquility, of light and strength. But when it repents of its care for vain things and wholly turns from corruptible things to the incorruptible God, then the fountain of living water again begins to flow into it, and peace, consolation, light, strength, and boldness before God and man once more dwell within it. We must live wisely.

* * *

You do not want to pray for a certain person because you hate and despise him? That is exactly the reason you *should* pray for him, this is exactly why you should petition the great Physician, because you yourself are spiritually sick with malice and pride. Your enemy, or the one whom you despise, is also sick; pray, therefore, that the meek Lord may teach you meekness and patience, that He may teach and strengthen you to love your enemies, not only your well-wishers, that He may teach you to pray sincerely for those who wish you evil, as well as those who wish you well.

* * *

During prayer, a certain person who became languid, tired in mind and body, and longed to sleep, roused himself by asking himself the following question: With Whom are you conversing, my soul? After this, by vividly

imagining the Lord before him, he began to pray with great feeling and tears. His blunted attention was sharpened, his mind and heart were enlightened, and he himself wholly revived. This shows what it means to see the Lord God vividly before us and to walk in His presence! O my soul, he went on to say, if you dare not converse lazily and carelessly with men in authority and power, lest you offend them, then how can you dare converse lazily and carelessly with the Lord?

* * *

Lord, how shall I glorify You? How shall I praise You for Your power, for the miraculous healing power of Your holy Mysteries, revealed in me and in many of Your servants, to whom I, an unworthy priest, have administered the Holy, Heavenly, Life-giving Mysteries after the sacrament of confession. They confess before me Your power, Your goodness, loudly proclaiming to all that You have stretched out Your wonderworking hand over them and raised them up from the bed of sickness, from their death-bed, when no one expected that they would live. Then, after the communion of Your life-giving Body and Blood, they soon revived, were healed, and felt the touch of Your Life-giving Hand that very day and hour. And I, Lord, the witness of Your deeds, have not yet praised You in the hearing of all for the strengthening of the faith of Your servants. I do not know how and when to praise You, for every day I am occupied with some kind of work. Create Yourself a name, Lord, as You have done. Glorify Yourself, Your name, Your Mysteries.

* * *

Deny yourself sensual delights in the hope that, instead of them, you will obtain higher, spiritual, heavenly delights. Do good to all in the hope that, according to God's justice, "*with what measure you use, it will be measured back to you*" (Matt 7:2). Hope that the good you have done to your neighbor will be sooner or later returned to you, just as the evil you have done him will sooner or later come back to haunt you. Remember that we are one body. "*We, though many, are one bread*" (1 Cor 10:17). Remember that God is just to the highest degree, down to the smallest details.

Where would we find opportunities to struggle and fight for virtue, if not for offenses and injuries by others? Where would we find opportunities for patiently bearing offenses, for meekness and humility? You see, then, that we must be tried by many and various evils in order to prove our virtue and deserve our crowns.

* * *

Do not be irritated either with those who sin or those who offend you; do not cultivate a passion for noticing every sin in your neighbor and for judging him, as we are all in the habit of doing. Everyone shall give an answer to God for himself. Everyone has a conscience. Everyone hears God's Word and knows God's will, either from books or from conversations with other people. Most importantly, do not judge the sins of your elders, which have nothing to do with you: "*to his own master he stands or falls*" (Rom 14:4). Correct your own sins; amend your own heart.

Why does the Lord allow poverty? For your own good, so that you may be cleansed from your sins and expiate them, "*for almsgiving rescues one from death, and it will wash away every sin*" (Tob 12.9), so that you will win suppliants who will pray for you (i.e., those to whom you give alms), so that the Lord may be merciful to you. "*Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy*" (Matt 5:7).

Why does the Lord allow poverty? For the same reason, among others, that He does not make you righteous all at once, according to your wish. God could make all men well off, even rich, but then a great forgetfulness of God would arise, and pride, envy, and all kinds of other sins would increase. And you would think too highly of yourself if the Lord made you too quickly righteous. But sin humbles you, showing you your great infirmity, impurity, and constant need of God and His grace, and the poor man also is humbled by his poverty and his need for other people. If the poor were to be enriched, many of them would forget God and their benefactors and would ruin their souls in the luxury of this world. This is how destructive riches are, because they blind spiritual vision! They make the heart coarse and ungrateful!

* * *

Thoughts in the street, during a walk, at the sight of the rising moon. I give you everything you need, says the Lord. I have created you in My own image and likeness; I have made the sun, the moon, and the stars shine for you; I have created the earth with all its fruits for you; I have created the air for you to breathe; I have given you fire to light and warm you and to cook your food; I have given you all kinds of pleasant food and drink; I have taught you how to sew your clothing from many different kinds of fabrics and have given you the materials needed for this purpose; I have given you gold, silver, copper, and other metals in the abysses of the earth for money and other objects; I have gathered you together in well-organized communities; I have given you a sovereign after My own heart, My anointed, My likeness upon earth; lastly, I have given you My Only-begotten Son. I have given Him to die for you; I have given Him, by His own will, to you as food and drink. I have founded the earthly Church under His lordship. What have you done and what are you doing for Me? How do you recompense Me for all My goodness? By your forgetfulness of Me, by your ingratitude to Me, by your denial of Me, by your disdain for My laws! "*O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you?*" (Matt 17:17).

Your name, O Lord, is Almighty, because You hold not only heaven and earth, but all mankind, the life of every man, the hearts of all in Your Hand. You hold not only the life of every man, but also of every beast, bird, fish, insect, worm, reptile, and of all infusoria invisible to the eye. Glory to Your infinite omnipotence, Lord! Glory to Your All-merciful, Most-wise, and All-powerful Providence! O Lord of heaven and earth! Almighty Sovereign! You also hold all of hell in Your hand, with Satan and his countless hosts, and it is only with Your permission, for our instruction and punishment, that Satan and his demons can lay their snares for us. As soon as we pray to You, our Saviour, as soon as we sincerely repent before You of our sins, You, having taught us, send away our enemies from us, saying, "You have done enough evil to My servants; they belong to Me again." Thus, Lord, if Your unceasing benefits and mercies to us do not teach us, what remains to be done? It only remains for You to teach us through chastisement, bitterness, constraint, fire, our own wickedness, for we are sensual creatures who love freedom, imagining it to be nothing more than free reign for our sensuality, slothfulness, negligence, and evil.

* * *

The world is in a state of slumber, of sinful sleep. It sleeps. God rouses it through wars, epidemics, fires, destructive storms, earthquakes, floods, and failed harvests.

* * *

"*The angelic hymn we cry out to Thee, O Mighty One! Holy, holy, holy art Thou, O God! Through the Theotokos have mercy on us.*"[13] You praise God in this way, together with the angels.[14] You are one assembly, one Church, one family with them through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, you should also live like the angels, in constant watchfulness over yourself and the souls of the spiritual children entrusted to your care. You must unceasingly praise and thank the Lord. You must always strive for holiness. You must live in abstinence and fasting, in humble-mindedness, obedience, and patience. May it be thus with you, by the Lord's grace!

What shall I give You, Lord, for all Your mercies, which You continually bestow so bountifully on me? Only my faith, for I have no works that shall justify me. I have done no good thing before Thee. But even my faith is Your gift. Receive "*Thine own of Thine own, offered unto Thee,*"[15] for everything is Yours, and we are all Yours. You are our most perfect Prototype. "*Of Thine unspeakable glory I am an image, and though I bear offenses, scars, have mercy on Thy creature, Lord, and cleanse me in Thy goodness, and the desired Fatherland give Thou to me, making me a citizen of Paradise once again.*"[16] Take from us carnal passions, "*so that we, trampling upon all carnal lusts, may follow a spiritual manner of life, both thinking and doing such things that are well pleasing unto Thee.*"[17]

* * *

Lord! It is natural to the Prototype to attach, to assimilate His images to Himself, to abide and to live in them. In the same way, it should be natural to those who are created in Your image to yearn for their Prototype with all their love, with all their zeal, and to attach themselves to You. But our greedy, sensual flesh, coarse and immovable, separates us from You. We

need fasting and abstinence, but instead we are passionate for sensual gratification. Strengthen us in abstinence!

* * *

When Christ is in our heart, we are content with everything. Even discomfort becomes the greatest comfort, bitterness becomes sweet, poverty becomes wealth, hunger becomes plenty, and sorrow becomes joy! But when Christ is not in our heart, then we are not content with anything, we find happiness in nothing—not in health, not in comfort, not in ranks and honors, not in amusements, not in rich palaces, not in a luxurious table, covered with all manner of food and drink, not in rich clothing—in nothing! O, how necessary for man is Christ, the Life-giver and Saviour of our souls! How necessary it is for us to hunger and thirst, to sleep less, to dress more simply, and to bear everything with a quiet, peaceful, patient, meek spirit for Christ's sake, so that He will dwell in us. The wicked fowler of our souls—the devil—seeks at every moment to ensnare our souls, trying to wound us by some sin or passion, searching for ways he can implant some sinful habit or passion more firmly within us, striving to make the salvation of our soul as difficult as possible, desiring to produce in us a coldness toward God, toward holy things, toward the Church, toward eternity, and toward mankind.

* * *

The Lord has created me and has brought me from nonexistence into being, and after I fell, He restored me through His suffering and death. He has cleansed me, a sinner, and made me His son by adoption. He has promised me the inheritance of eternal bliss; He has enlightened me through the light of His Gospel. He punishes and forgives me like a father. He lights me with the sun. He gives me daily food and drink, and above all He gives me His sweetest and life-giving food—His own Body and Blood. He has created air for me to breathe, and above all He has poured upon me His Holy Spirit. He clothes me in beautiful garments, but above all He inwardly clothes me with Himself: "*For as many of you were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Gal 3:27). He gives me rest in a spacious and clean dwelling and promises me an eternal, resplendent abode in the heavens. He endows me with health, but more importantly He gives me spiritual health

in abundance through prayer and especially through the Holy Sacraments. What shall I render to Him for all this? What can I do for Him in return? I cannot do anything, except to be faithful to Him with all my strength, fulfilling His Commandments and offering a firm and unflagging resistance to sin and the evil.

If it were not for Your salvation, Lord, if it were not for Your beneficence, we should have burned in the fires of our own passions. Satan would have finally corrupted and tormented us, and we would not have found any comfort or joy in life. "*If the Lord were not with us, we none could have withstood the enemy's attacks … for they that overcome will be exalted.*"[18] But now we are comforted by Your mercy, by Your grace, which You have won for us by Your sufferings, by Your Blood, by Your death for us. Glory to You for this, O Lover of mankind! But how terrible it will be with those Christians who do not wish to know You, Your Commandments, Your teaching!

O my Lord and God, Jesus Christ, what if Your divine light were to shine forth from Your most-pure Mysteries when they lie on the holy altar or on the holy diskos during the liturgy, or in the tabernacle, or in the receptacle that the priest carries on his breast when he visits the sick? Before such a light, all those who saw it would prostrate themselves to the ground in fear, for even the angels cover their faces before Your inaccessible glory! But meanwhile, how indifferently some people behave toward these most heavenly Mysteries! How carelessly some persons celebrate the awesome service of the Holy Mysteries!

* * *

I must always remember my relation to God. On the one hand, it is the relation of a creature to the Creator, a work of art to the Artist, a potter's vessel to the Potter. On the other hand, I am the image of the Prototype; I am a child of the Father; I have been saved by the Saviour; I have been given countless gifts by the Benefactor; I am bound to the law of the Law Giver; I have entered a Covenant with the giver of the Testament; I am betrothed to the Bridegroom; I am a member of the great city of God; I look for the age to come, to the Father of those ages; I am the accused before the Judge.

* * *

In everything and at every time strive to please God and think of the salvation of your soul from sin and from the devil, and of its adoption by God. As you rise from your bed, make the sign of the cross and say, "In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit," and "*Vouchsafe, O Lord, to keep us this day without sin and teach me to do Thy Will."*[19] While washing, either at home or at the *banya*,[20] say, "*Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall become whiter than snow*" (Psalm 50:9). When putting on your clothes, think of the cleanliness of the heart and ask the Lord for a clean heart, "*Make me a clean heart, O God!*" (Psalm 50:12). If you have made new clothes and are putting them on, think of the renewal of the spirit and say, "*Renew a right spirit within me*" (Psalm 50:12). As you lay aside old clothes with disdain, think with still greater disdain of laying aside the old man—the sinful, passionate, carnal man. As you taste the sweetness of bread, think of the true Bread, Who gives eternal life to the soul—the Body and Blood of Christ. Hunger after this bread and long to commune more often. As you drink water, tea, sweet-tasting mead, or any other drink, think of the true drink that quenches the thirst of the soul inflamed by passions—the most-pure and life-giving Blood of the Saviour. As you rest during the day, think of the eternal rest prepared for those who battle and struggle against sin and the spirits of evil, against human injustice, disrespect, and ignorance. As you lie down to sleep at night, think of the sleep of death, which sooner or later will unfailingly come to all of us. Think of the dark, eternal, terrible night into which all impenitent sinners will be cast. When you greet the day, think of the day without night, eternal, brighter than the sunniest day on earth—the day of the kingdom of Heaven. All who have striven to please God, all who have repented before God in this temporary life will rejoice in that day. When you are going anywhere, think of the rightness of spiritually walking before God and say, "*Direct my steps according to Thy word, and let not any wickedness have dominion over me*" (Psalm 118:133). When you do anything, strive to do it with the thought of God, the Creator, Who has made everything in His infinite wisdom, grace, and omnipotence, Who has created you in His image and likeness. When you receive or have any money or treasure, remember that God is our inexhaustible Treasure, the Source of every good thing, from Whom we receive all the treasures of our

soul and body. Thank Him with your entire soul and do not shut your treasures within yourself, lest you shut the entrance of your heart to the priceless and living treasure—God Himself—but distribute part of your property among those who are in need, your poor brothers who are reduced to their present circumstances so that you may prove your love for them, your gratitude to God and be rewarded for this by God in eternity. When you see the glitter of silver, do not be allured by it, but remember that your soul should shine with Christ's virtues. When you see the glitter of gold, do not be allured by it, but remember that your soul should be purified by fire, as gold is. Do not forget that the Lord desires to make you shine like the sun, in the eternal, bright kingdom of His Father. Do not forget that you will see the Sun of Righteousness—God in Three Persons—the most-holy Virgin Theotokos and all the heavenly powers and saints, filled with ineffable light and shining with the light poured through them.

Lord! What shall I bring You? How shall I thank You for Your never-ending mercies to me and the rest of Your people? For I am at every moment enlivened by Your Holy Spirit. Every moment, I breathe the air You have created—the soft, pleasant, seasonable, strengthening air. I am illumined by Your life-giving and joyful light, both spiritual and material. I am nourished and my thirst is quenched by the sweetest life-giving spiritual food and drink, by the sacrament of Your Body and Blood, as well as the sweetness of physical food and drink. You clothe me with the brightest, most splendid royal garment—with Yourself—according to the Scripture: "*as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Gal 3:27), and You clothe me with earthly garments as well. You cleanse me from my sins, healing and cleansing me also from my evil, sinful passions. You take away my spiritual corruption through the power of Your immeasurable holiness, wisdom, and might. You fill me with Your Holy Spirit, the Spirit of holiness and grace. You give righteousness, peace and joy, freedom, power, boldness, courage, and strength to my soul. You bestow precious health to my body. You teach "*my hands to war, and my fingers to fight*" (Psalm 143:1) against the invisible enemies of my salvation and blessedness, against the enemies of holiness and of the power of Your glory, against the spirits of evil. You crown me with success in all I do, as long as I do it in Your name. For all this I thank, glorify, and bless Your Most-gracious, Fatherly, Almighty Power, O God, our Saviour, our Benefactor. May the rest of Your people know You as You have revealed

Yourself to me, Lover of mankind. May they know You, Your grace, Your providence, Your wisdom and power, and may they glorify You with the Father and the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and to ages of ages. Amen.

"*The unspeakable joy of them that behold the infinite beauty of Thy countenance.*"[21] Earthly bliss passes away by itself and through vicissitudes of human life, while the joys of heaven will never end. They will be infinite. Is it not worthwhile, therefore, to despise all the enjoyments of this transitory world and of this still more fleeting life, and instead to strive with the whole heart for spiritual and unchangeable joys?

It is madness for a Christian to envy. In Christ, we have all received infinitely great blessings. We are all deified. We are all made inheritors of the unutterable and eternal blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven. And we are also promised sufficient earthly blessings, on the condition that we seek the righteousness of God and the Kingdom of God: "*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*" (Matt 6:33). We are commended to be content with what we have and not to be covetous. "Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have." And also, "*For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you' "* (Heb 13:5). Is it not, therefore, madness to envy your neighbor anything, such as his honors, wealth, luxurious table, beautiful clothing, fine house, etc.? Is not all this mere dross in comparison with that which has been given us—the image and likeness of God, in which we were created; the redemption by the Son of God from our sins, from the curse, and from death; the repeated blessing of our Heavenly Father; and eternal heavenly joys? Therefore, let us strive to acquire mutual love, goodwill, and contentedness with what we have. Let us acquire friendship, hospitality, love for the poor and the stranger, "and attain to the summit of virtues"—humility, meekness, gentleness, and holiness. Let us respect the image of God in each other, the members of Christ our God, His Body, God's sons by adoption, the citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, the participants of the heavenly, angelic choir. "*That they may be one*" (John 17:22), as our God, worshipped in the Holy Trinity, is One, Who has created our hearts as a single, simple spiritual substance.

All present things are but a shadow of the future. The present light is a shadow of the future, ineffable light. Earthly joy is a faint shadow of future, unutterable, eternal bliss. Physical fire is a faint shadow of the fire of Gehenna, which will burn sinners unto ages of ages. Even the purest earthly

joy is a shadow of unutterable future joys. Magnificent royal palaces are a faint shadow of the resplendent mansions of Paradise, prepared for those who love God and fulfill His commandments. The glorious attire of the sons and daughters of men cannot be compared with that glorious garment with which the elect shall be clothed, for they will put on Christ. "*Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*" (Matt 13:43), according to the Saviour's unfailing promise.

In the same way as a child is indifferent to whatever clothes are put on him, the Christian, an infant in Christ, should be indifferent to the variety, richness, and beauty of his earthly garments, considering Christ, our God, to be his best, most incorruptible garment. An attachment to expensive, fine clothes is peculiar to the children of this world and to pagans, as the Lord says, "*For after all these things*"—that is, food and fine raiment—"*the Gentiles seek*" (Matt 6:32), for clothing is the idol of the children of this world. O, how vain and frivolous are we, we who are called to communion with God, to whom is promised the inheritance of incorruptible and eternal blessings! How obscure is our understanding of corruptible and incorruptible blessings! How unwise we are in valuing worthless things and not prizing incorruptible blessings—our immortal soul, peace, joy, boldness before God, holiness, obedience, patience, and all the qualities of a true Christian. "*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Gal 3:27). Therefore, we must value spiritual blessings and valor, and despise material things as corruptible and worthless.

The sin of inattention is one to which we are often subjected; we must not disregard it, but must repent of it, for we give ourselves up to inattention not only at home, but also in church. "*Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail*" (Luke 22:31–32). The causes of inattention are the devil and our constant attachment to worldly, earthly things. Its reason is lack of faith; the means to overcome it is fervent prayer.

There is no happiness for me on earth except in the Lord Jesus Christ, with His Father and the Holy Spirit. He is my sole blessedness on earth. After God, there is nothing on earth dearer to me (as it should be) than the human soul. Man is a precious being. God Himself came down from heaven to earth for his salvation. To man He gives His most-pure Body and Blood (all of Himself) as food and drink, that he may become blessed, that he may be no longer lost. He has given all the fruits of the earth, all the treasures of

the three kingdoms of the earth for the use and pleasure of man. Through all these countless blessing, the Lord has shown, and still shows, that He infinitely loves mankind as a whole, and every man separately. Let us, too, imitate God's love and bountifulness. Let us be, as far as possible, merciful and generous, as our Heavenly Father is merciful (Luke 6:36).

Wherever I look with the eyes of my heart, whether inside myself, at myself, or outside of myself, everywhere I see powerful reasons for thanking and praising the Lord. Especially when I look inside myself, I see the strongest reason for doing so. The entire strength of my heart, all the light in my heart comes from God. All my bodily strength, everything that serves to maintain my bodily life, comes from God. Everywhere, I see the glory, the one glory, of my God, and I see nothing in myself of which I could boast as belonging to me. Glory to Him Who gives me strength! Glory to Him Who works through me and within me. Since I have nothing of my own and receive everything I have from God, down to the smallest good inclination of my heart, down to every holy and bright thought, then, consequently, without God I am nothing. Worse than this, I am completely evil; therefore, I have the strongest reasons to have recourse to God in prayer for everything. I have especially powerful reasons to thank God for His most-pure and life-giving Mysteries—His Body and Blood. Communion is everything to me. I fervently praise the Lord Jesus Christ, our God, for His unspeakable love to us mortals, revealed in the Holy Mysteries.

* * *

What an immeasurably great honor for mankind to be able to speak to God. They can converse with Him, petition Him for their needs, thank Him for His benefits, praise His unspeakable magnificence, and be assured that this sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise is pleasing to God. Our best and most spiritual requests, those relating to the salvation of our souls, are always answered! How immeasurably high is man exalted in this respect above all other sentient and animate creatures! No other creature has received such honor from God, though they, too, have tongues, expressing the needs of their nature, for it is said that even young ravens call upon Him (Psalm 146:9). Let us, therefore, make use of this great honor, in order to be worthy of a still greater honor from the Lord—the heavenly calling. There,

in heaven, shall be our full glory, while here only its beginnings are revealed to true Christians.

Because we are both bodily and spiritual creatures, the Lord unites His grace, even Himself, to everything visible and material and works through everything—He transforms bread and wine into His own Body and Blood; He changes the church building into His own house; He invisibly sits on the altar table, enthroned as a king; He manifests Himself on the cross, as though in the same body in which He was crucified; and He works miracles by means of the cross, showing His life-giving power through it. He is in the universe as in a temple, present in all places, not limited by space, being always above every space and time. You marvel that He can unite His own self, or His power and His saving grace, to matter? Marvel, first of all, how He has united in man His divine image with matter, with earth and dust. Marvel at how this dust can think, speak, and exude the fragrance of meekness, righteousness, truth, and love, and can accomplish in everyday life so many wonderful, truly miraculous, works. Marvel also at how many different kinds of speechless souls are enclosed in the dust, gifted with a certain level of intelligence, a thirst for life and joy, a sense of self-preservation, a capacity for finding themselves food, for constructing what is necessary for their safety, for bringing their progeny into the world, and for understanding how to defend themselves cleverly. Marvel how nearly all inanimate bodies are united with invisible, intangible powers, which sometimes move their enormous masses (such as the heavenly bodies), sometimes transform them into beautiful forms, always identical (such as plants). Marvel that so many different powers are created by God, for all powers are derived from the one Single Power, and the Almighty Himself works through every power. Truly, everything that God the Creator does is wonderful, since He is the God of wonders. It is the same with faith—everything is wonderful, though invisible, but true and real!

* * *

"*The pure in heart, For they shall see God*" (Matt 5:8). God is an all-seeing Eye, a Spiritual Sun, standing above the world, penetrating into the thoughts and hearts of men with His spiritual eyes, enlightening every creature. Our soul is an eye derived from the Eye, sight from the Sight, light from the Light. But now, since our fall into sin, our eye, our soul, is

diseased through sin. Take the cataract off your eye, and you will see the spiritual Sun, the everlasting Eye, ten thousand times brighter than the material sun.

How often it happens in life that a person has one thing in his heart and another on his lips, wearing two faces at the same time! It is thus also during prayer, before God Himself, Who knows the secrets of the heart, that a person also frequently wears two faces, saying one thing and having another in his heart and thoughts. If, during prayer, his heart does not feel the power of the words of the prayer, even though he understands it with his mind (this happens even more often), he is like a dead man tossing words at the air. He deceives himself if he believes that he can please God with such a prayer. This is a strange, sinful duplicity! It is a bitter fruit, evidence of our fall into sin. It seems habitual to our heart to lie during prayer and in our conversations with others. The heart is a pillar of falsehood. "*All men are liars*" (Psalm 115:2). The Christian must do everything he can to eradicate all falsehood from his heart and to implant pure truth within it. We must begin with prayer, as with a matter in which truth is indispensable, according to the Lord's own words: "*those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth*" (John 4:24). Speak the truth from your heart (Psalm 14:2). When we have learned to speak the truth from our heart during prayer, then we shall not allow ourselves to lie in our everyday life. Sincere, true prayer, having cleansed our heart from falsehood, will protect it against falsehood in our relations with other people in worldly matters. How can we teach ourselves to speak the truth from our heart during prayer? We must bring every word of the prayer down to our heart, place it in the heart, feel its truth in our heart, be convinced of all our need for that which we ask God in prayer, or of the need for heartfelt gratitude for His great and countless benefits to us, and the need for heartfelt praise for His great, wise works in His creation.

Everything that makes me human (i.e., the soul) lives solely through God, and only in union with Him, but when the soul separates itself from God, it experiences extreme distress. The life of my soul consists in the peace of my spiritual powers, and this peace proceeds exclusively from God. There is, it is true, carnal peace also, but it is a delusive one, a mere harbinger of an impending spiritual storm. Concerning this, the Scriptures say, "*when they say, "Peace and safety!" then suddenly destruction comes upon them*" (1 Thess 5:3). On the other hand, spiritual peace, which

proceeds from the Spirit of God, differs from such carnal peace as heaven from earth. It is heavenly, a state that gives true blessedness. “Peace I give you,” the Lord often said to His disciples, giving them His peace, and the Apostles also gave “peace to believers” and wished them God’s peace as the highest blessing, because God’s peace is the life of our soul and is a witness to the union of our soul with God. The absence of peace in the soul, (i.e., disturbance), which is the characteristic of all the passionate conditions of our soul, is spiritual death and the sign of the activity of the enemy of our salvation in our hearts.

Faith is the key to God’s treasury. Faith dwells in simple, kind, loving hearts. “*All things are possible to him who believes*” (Mark 9:23). Faith is a spiritual mouth, and the more freely it opens, the greater the stream of divine water that enters into it. Let this mouth freely open as your bodily one does; do not let your lips be compressed by doubt and unbelief. If you compress them through your doubt and unbelief, the treasury of God’s blessings will be closed to you. The more openly, the more sincerely you believe in God’s omnipotence, the more bountifully will God’s heart be opened to you. “*What things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them*” (Mark 11:24).

All men are the breath and creation of the One God. From God they have come forth, and to God, as to their source, they will return: “*Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it*” (Eccl 12:7). “*That through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*” (2 Pet 1:4). As the breath of the One God and the descendants of one man, mankind should, naturally, live in mutual love, caring for one another, not divided from each other by selfishness, pride, malice, envy, avarice, or unsociability: “*that they may be one*” (John 17:22). Look at the ants, how friendly they are; look at the bees, how friendly they are; look at the pigeons, daws, rooks, crows, geese, ducks, swans, sparrows, how friendly they all are; look at a flock of sheep, and in general at any horned cattle, how friendly they all are. Think of the countless groups of certain kinds of fish in the seas and rivers, which always like to move in schools, how friendly they are. Think also how zealously they all take care of each other, help each other, love each other, and be shamed by these dumb creatures, you who do not live in love with others and flee from the obligation of bearing another’s burdens (Gal 6:2).

God is long-suffering and merciful to you; this you experience many times every day. Be long-suffering and merciful to your brethren, also fulfilling the words of the Apostle, who speaks of love first and foremost in this way: "*Love suffers long and is kind*" (1 Cor 13:4). Do you desire that the Lord give you the joy of His love? Then do your part to give joy to the hearts of others through your gentle love and manner of speaking.

God is love, a most-gracious, all-wise, and omnipotent Being. Therefore, those who pray must believe that the Lord will give all things needful in abundance, since He is loving, and in wisdom, since He is all-wise. Since He is omnipotent, He will give to us in the time and place we least expect.

* * *

During divine services, during the celebration of all the sacraments and prayers, you should be as trusting as a child with his parents. Remember what great Fathers of the Church, what inspired luminaries, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, are guiding you! Be simple, trusting, undoubting as a child in what concerns God. Lay all your cares upon the Lord, and be entirely free from sorrow. "*Do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father, which speaks in you*" (Matt 10:19–20). The Lord has long ago freed us from this care, this sorrow, having taught our God-fearing Fathers through His Spirit what to say and how to pray to the Lord at divine services, at the celebration of the sacraments, and during various other occasions and events in human life, when one prays to call down divine blessing from above. It should be easy for us to pray. But the enemy troubles us! But what does that matter, if our heart is firmly established in the Lord? The only misfortune is if we do not rest in God, if there is no firm faith in us, if we have bound ourselves to worldly attachments, if our intellect is proud and presumptuous. Then, even in the holiest, purest service to God—the celebration and communion of the Holy Mysteries—the enemy will greatly hinder us.

Be as kind, meek, humble, and simple as possible in your interaction with other people, considering yourself inferior to all in spiritual condition (but without hypocrisy), that is, more sinful and weaker than anyone else. Say to yourself, "Of all sinners, I am the first." From pride proceeds self-

sufficiency, coldness, and insincerity in our behavior to our inferiors, or to those from whom we do not expect any personal gain.

* * *

How quick we are to do evil, how slow to do good! Let us imagine that I want to do good to my enemy and to really show him kindness, but before I even begin to become kind in my heart, I am already full of anger, and a fiery arrow of evil already inwardly burns me. I wish to be patient, but before I have strengthened my heart in patience, I become irritable and impatient. I wish to be humble, but Satan's pride has already found a comfortable resting-place in my heart. I wish to be gentle, but when the time comes, I act rudely. I wish to be nonacquisitive and generous, but greed and avarice, at the smallest provocation, require to be fed like ravenous and roaring lions. I wish to be simple and trusting, but cunning and doubt already gnaw at my heart. I wish to be steady, focused, and reverent in my service to the Almighty, but light-mindedness and inattention of the heart prevent my becoming so. I wish to detach myself from earthly things, to be abstinent in food and drink, but when I see pleasant food and drink and sit down to table, like a slave I am taken a willing captive by my belly, and I easily allow myself to eat and drink more than my nature require. Greed and intemperance again get the better of my desire to be indifferent to food and drink, and thus I am like that paralytic who lay for thirty-eight years upon his bed and many times approached the pool of Bethesda, which healed whoever first entered the water after it was troubled by an angel, "*but while I am coming, another steps down before me*" (John 5:7). And when I, having become powerless through my sins, make an effort and try to sober myself with the intention of immersing myself in God and changing for the better, another steps into my heart before me, sin and the devil anticipate me in my own house, in my own pool of Bethesda, and they do not allow me to reach the Source of living waters, the Lord. They do not allow me to immerse myself in the cleansing pool of faith, humility, heartfelt contrition, and tears. Who will heal me then? Jesus Christ alone. When He sees my sincere and firm desire to be healed of my spiritual infirmity, when He hears my fervent prayer, then He will say to me, "*take up your bed and walk*" (John 5:8), and I shall rise from

the bed of spiritual infirmity and walk. Through His grace I shall easily vanquish all my passions and accomplish every virtue.

During prayer, intentional, deliberate, extreme humility is indispensable. We must remember who is speaking and what he is saying. This is especially important during the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father …." Humility destroys all the snares of the enemy. Ah! How much secret pride is there in us. We say: I know this. I do not need that, this is not for me, this is redundant in that I have not sinned. How wise we all are!

* * *

Sin, passions, the devil—these immediately change the face of a person from bright to dark, from good to evil. Notice the incredible transformative power of the soul! Of some actresses it is said that she changes her facial expressions remarkably quickly, changes emotions with astonishing speed, expressing them on her face. What is so remarkable here? What is the human soul *not* capable of? If the human soul is capable of transforming the face so easily and quickly, does it not follow that the Creator of all will create what He wishes out of whatever matter He desires, as One Who is everywhere present and fillest all things?

* * *

When you pray, battle against the various thoughts and provocations that come from the enemy with these words, spoken from the heart: "The Lord is everything to me." Likewise, during your entire life, when passions attack you, during every affliction of the enemy, during sicknesses, misfortunes, and disasters, say the following: "The Lord is everything to me; I myself can do nothing. I cannot bear anything, I cannot overcome or conquer anything. He alone is my strength."

* * *

"*Whosoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed*" (Mark 8:38). O contemptible shame! O demonic shame! O stink of Satan, ascending from the abyss! How many are diseased with it? How many do not recognize its enticement and become enslaved by it, to the ruin of their

souls? Look at worldly writers, journalists, writers of novels. They write, write, write… of what will they not write during their literary career? But of God, of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, of the Church, of divine services, of the Christian feasts, of the resurrection of our body, of the judgment, of the life beyond the grave, they do not even make a passing mention. They say it is not their field, not their business. We are of the world, we speak of worldly matters, and therefore the world listens to us, but if we were to speak of God, perhaps nobody would read what we write. Thus, worldly literature is completely foreign to the spirit of Christianity. It even seems to be ashamed of the spirit of Christ.

In order to prevent us from becoming angry with him, the devil cunningly induces us to notice our neighbors' sins, to make us spiteful and angry with them and to awaken our contempt of them, thus keeping us at enmity with our neighbors and with the Lord God Himself. Therefore, we must despise the sins, the faults themselves, but not our brother who commits them at the devil's instigation, through infirmity and habit. We must pity him and gently and lovingly instruct him, as one who forgets himself or is sick, as a prisoner and slave of his sin. But our animosity and our anger toward the sinner only worsens his sickness, forgetfulness, and spiritual bondage, instead of lessening them, and it makes us like madmen or sick men, the prisoners of our own passions and the devil, their perpetrator.

* * *

Every sin is of the spirit of evil. He who sins is the slave of sin, tortured by sin. Therefore, do not be too severe, but be gentle with the sinner, considering our common infirmity. Pity the sinner as one who is sick, or who has lost his way and is walking in darkness, or as one who is bound with iron fetters, or as one whose mind is deranged, for all these qualities may be attributed to a sinner, or to one who is under the dominion of some passion. It is necessary to take care of such a person in every way, so that the fire of sin will not consume him, darken him, bind him, plunge him into sickness, destroy him.

* * *

We have become accustomed to the works of God, and therefore we hardly value them at all. We do not, for instance, even value mankind, that greatest work and miracle of God's omnipotence and grace, as we should. Look at every person, whether he is one of your household or a stranger to you, as a novelty in God's world, the greatest miracle of God's omnipotence and grace, and do not let the fact of your being accustomed to him become a reason for you to neglect him. Esteem and love him as your own self—constantly and unchangeably.

* * *

Sometimes in nature a warm, seasonable wind blows pleasantly and lightly, caressing the body, and the sky is bright. At other times, a cold wind blows, and one feels, somehow, distressed and feverish, as the wind pierces to the very bones and affects the body unpleasantly, while the earth and sky are darkened. Sometimes the state of the atmosphere is warm and warming, and at other times it is cold, freezing. It is the same in the spiritual life. Sometimes our soul is surrounded and caressed by a light, pleasant, warming, enlivening breath, and we feel joyful and tranquil. At other times, our heart is overwhelmed by a heavy, deathly breath, accompanied by complete spiritual darkness. The first state proceeds from the Spirit of God, the second from the devil. It is necessary to accustom ourselves to everything. In the first case, we should not grow conceited, and in the second, we should not fall into despondency and despair, but we should fervently run to God.

* * *

If man had not been created in the image of God, the Lord would not have become incarnate of the Most-holy Virgin. O, how our nature is raised, both in its creation and in its redemption! Through the incarnation of the Son of God from the Most-holy Virgin Mary, God has most truly united Himself with man. "*O Thou, by Thy glorious birth-giving hast united God-the-Word with men, and linked our apostate nature with heavenly things.*"[22] Glory to You, Who are worthily praised by every reasonable creature, for You have obtained from God such grace and purity that You were able, through the goodwill of God the Father, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, to give flesh to the Son of God! Make us also worthy, O Lord, to attain

purity of spirit and body through the communion of the Divine Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Your Son.

Through His incarnation, the Lord has entered into the closest intimacy with man. It is marvelous! God Himself is united in one person with man. God became flesh: "*the Word became flesh*" (John 1:14). God Himself partook of our earthly food and drink, was laid in a manger, lived in a house. He Who cannot be contained by the heavens walked upon the earth, upon the waters, upon the air. "*[T]hey looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up*" (Acts 1:10). He was nailed to the tree, "*He Who hangeth the earth upon nothing by His command.*"[23] The whole earth, the waters, and the air—all are sanctified by the incarnate Son of God; therefore, the earth is dear to Him—this temporary abode of men, this roadside inn of the human race, this place of His habitation for mankind. But especially dear to Him are people themselves, whose souls and bodies He has received into unity with His own Person, especially true Christians. He is in them, and they in Him.

What does man desire above all? The avoidance of sin, the remission and forgiveness of sins, and the attainment of holiness. Why? Because sins such as pride, malice to our neighbors, wicked suspiciousness, covetousness, avarice, envy, and others, separate us from God, the Source of life; withdraw us from fellowship with other men; and plunge us into spiritual death. On the contrary, meek, humble, and kind behavior to all (even to our enemies), simplicity, nonacquisitiveness, contentedness with little, generosity to everyone, goodwill, and all other virtuous qualities unite us to God, the Source of life, and to other men by endearing us to them. Grant then, Lord, that we may entirely flee from sin, that we may accustom ourselves to every virtue through Your grace. Yea, Oh Lord, Master, without You we, "*being evil*" (Matt 12:34), can do nothing good.

We must not be exasperated, angry, or proud against those who are angry, envious, or proud toward us, as is usual for our corrupt nature, but we must pity them as those possessed by the flames of hell and by spiritual death. We must pray to God for their sake from the depths of our hearts, that the Lord may take away the darkness from their souls and enlighten their hearts with the light of His grace. We are darkened by our own passions and do not see their foolishness and wickedness, but when the Lord enlightens us with the light of His grace, then we, awaking as from a sleep, clearly see the wickedness, the foolishness of our thoughts, feelings, words, and actions.

Our hearts, which were hardened until then, soften, and the evil passes away and is replaced by mercy, kindness, and condescension. Therefore, according to our Saviour's words, we must also love our enemies: "*love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you*" (Matt 5:44), for they, our brothers, are also blind and have gone astray.

This present life is a life of exile. "*The Lord God sent him out of the garden of Eden*" (Gen 3:23), and we, all of us, must earnestly strive to regain our home through repentance and works worthy of repentance. O Lord, "*the desired fatherland give Thou to me, make me a citizen of Paradise once again.*"[24] The present life is the narrow way, the way of afflictions, privations, and maladies. The narrower the way, the more convincing, the more we can be convinced that we are going the right, true way, but the wider it is, the more we can be certain that we are close to destruction. This present life is a daily cruel, most bitter struggle against the enemies of our salvation, especially against the invisible spirits of evil, who do not leave us in peace for a single day but constantly make use of their craft and subtlety against us, kindling various passions within us and wounding us painfully with their arrows. Remember, therefore, that an incessant war is waged against us; there is not time to rest, to enjoy, and amuse ourselves in this life, which is given us for our preparation for the future one. We cannot rest when we are tried by misfortunes; we cannot rest even when it seems to us that we are perfectly easy and happy, as, for instance, when we give ourselves up to the pleasures of theaters or parties, when we display ourselves in festive attire and ornaments, when we give ourselves up to the pleasures of the table, when we whirl about in pleasant dancing, when we drive in fine carriages, etc. O man! In the midst of all your worldly pleasures, the greatest misfortune hangs over you. You are a sinner; you are God's enemy; you are in great danger of losing eternal life, especially if you live negligently, if you do not do works worthy of repentance. The wrath of God hangs over you, especially if you do not appease—through your prayers, penitence, and amendment—the God Whom you have offended. This is no time for pleasures, but for tears. Your pleasures should be rare and principally such as are afforded you by faith—in spiritual feasts.

God is an almighty power over all material worlds. More than that, He is a most-wonderful, most-merciful, and most-just power over the spiritual

world, the world of angels and men. In His hands are all spirits, their peace and blessedness, as well as the anguish and torments of evil spirits and evil men.

* * *

We sometimes blaspheme the Divinity by the impure, dark, and evil state of our soul; we blaspheme the Father, the Word, and the Most-holy Spirit, the Comforter. On the contrary, some men, through the benevolent disposition of their souls, are capable of comforting everyone with their words, thereby glorifying the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, "*Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God*" (2 Cor 1:4).

The Lord, the Pantocrator (God Almighty). His omnipotence embraces all creatures, the highest and the lowest, noetic and sentient, angels and men, heaven and all that is therein, the earth and everything upon it, the sea and everything within it. His omnipotence absolutely embraces everything in general and every part of creation. It embraces the heart of man and his thoughts; therefore, it is said, "*the king's heart is in the hand of the Lord*" (Prov 21:1). This is also why the Apostle Paul says, "*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God*" (2 Cor 3:5). If God's grace leaves my heart and my mind, I become as the dust carried away by the wind, without any moral stability, with an inclination to every possible evil. Both my mind and my heart become empty, trivial, dark, and powerless.

The Virgin Mary is the most merciful Queen of all the sons and daughters of men, as the Daughter of God the Father, Who is Love, the Mother of God the Word, our Beloved, the chosen bride of the Holy Spirit, Who is Love consubstantial with the Father and the Word. How can we not run to such a Queen to receive all spiritual blessings from Her?

* * *

Lay on your heart the firm intention to hate every sin of thought, word, and deed, and when you are tempted to sin, resist it valiantly and with a feeling of hatred for it. Only beware, lest your hatred should turn against your brother, who was the reason for your sin. Hate the sin with all your

heart, but pity your brother; instruct him, and pray for him to the Almighty, Who sees all of us and tries our hearts and innermost parts. "*You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin*" (Heb 12:4). It is impossible not to often fall into sin unless you have a hatred of it implanted in your heart. Self-love must be eradicated. Every sin comes from the love of self. Sin always pretends to be our well-wisher, promising us plenteousness and ease. "*The tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise*" (Gen 3:6). This is how sin always appears to us.

If our guardian angels did not preserve us from the snares of evil demons, how often would we fall from one sin into another, how the devils would torment us—they who delight in tormenting men—which indeed happens when the Lord allows our guardian angels to withdraw from us for a time, and the devils lay snares for us. Yes, the angels of peace, our true guides, the guardians of our souls and bodies, are ever with us if we do not voluntarily drive them away from us through the abomination of sensuality, pride, doubt, and unbelief. We somehow feel that they cover us with the wings of their immaterial glory, only we do not see them. Our good thoughts, inclinations, words, and deeds all proceed from them.

* * *

The enemy often wounds our souls with his malice and burns us. This wound spreads like gangrene in the heart if we do not stop it in time with the sincere prayer of faith. God wounds our souls with His love, but this wound is light, sweet; not burning, but warming and vivifying.

* * *

Concerning repentance. Repentance should be sincere, perfectly free, and not in any way forced by any particular time and habit, or by the person before whom the sinner confesses. Otherwise, it will not be true penitence. "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt 4:17). It is at hand—that is, it has come by itself. It is not necessary to seek for it long; it searches for our free inclination. In other words, you yourself must repent with heartfelt contrition. "*[They] were baptized by him*" (it was said of those baptized of John) "*confessing their sins*" (Matt 3:6). That is, they themselves acknowledged their sins. And since our prayer consists

principally of penitence and asking forgiveness of our sins, it must absolutely be always sincere and perfectly free, not against our will, not forced out of us by habit and custom. This is how our prayer should also be when we give thanks and praise to God. Gratitude assumes that the soul of the forgiven man is full of free, living feeling flowing freely from the lips, "*for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks*" (Matt 12:34). Praise, too, assumes an ecstasy of wonder in the person who contemplates the infinite goodness, wisdom, and omnipotence of God in the moral and material world, and therefore it should also be a perfectly free, reasonable action. In general, prayer should be a free and perfectly conscientious outpouring of the man's heart before God, "*[I] have poured out my soul before the Lord."*[25]

In order to purify and stimulate our prayer, the Lord allows the devil to painfully inflame our inward parts, so that we, feeling a strange fire within us and suffering from it, may endeavor to bring the fire of God into our heart through humble prayer, the fire of the Holy Spirit that gives life to our hearts.

* * *

The Lord allows the enemy's temptations to test us, to strengthen our spiritual powers in the struggle against our enemy, so that we ourselves can more clearly discern our heart's inclination, whether it inclines to patience, hope, love, and virtue in general, or whether it prefers irritability, doubt, complaining, blasphemy, anger, and despair. Therefore we must not be despondent, but must kind-heartedly and patiently bear the spiritual darkness that descends on our soul, the fire that weakens and inclines us to impatience and malice, sorrow and pain, knowing that all these are indispensable for our spiritual life, because through them the Lord is testing us. Let us not blaspheme against the true way, the way of holy faith and virtue, and let us not prefer the evil way. We are free, and must strengthen ourselves in faith and virtue every way we can, even unto the laying down of our life (John 15:13) for the way of truth. How can this be if we have no temptations?

The devil strikes the hearts of priests with slothfulness, dryness, and barrenness to prevent their preaching the truth of the Gospel to God's people, to prevent their telling them the entire will of God. During prayer,

he also works on the heart and strikes it with insensibility, so that the priest's prayer would not be sincere, but automatic. He does not let the heart contemplate the greatness of all God's perfections during prayer, the greatness of the Mother of God, the angels, and God's saints. The devil is like an evil, sharp needle, which, at every time and everywhere, pokes the eyes of your heart, dimming and piercing them. He is the poisonous dust that always flies about our spiritual atmosphere and settles corrosively on our hearts, eating them up and piercing them. He acts in the same way with some teachers of religion, striking their hearts with dryness and oppression, to prevent their teaching God's truths sympathetically to the young branches of Christ's vine, lest they water them with the life-giving streams of the Gospel.

* * *

Let me describe a typical social scene: talk, talk, and more talk, for the most part filled with amusing trifles, but no mention of God—the common Father of all—of His love for us, of the future life, of the judgment. Why is this so? Because they are ashamed to speak of God. But what is still more surprising is that even persons who consider themselves pious social luminaries seldom speak of God, of Christ the Saviour, of the preciousness of time, of abstinence, of the resurrection from the dead, of judgment, of future bliss and everlasting torments, either in their family circle or among men of the world, but more often they spend their time in empty conversations, games, and occupations! This is, again, because they are ashamed to converse on such subjects, being afraid to weary others, or fearing that they themselves may not be able to converse from the heart about spiritual subjects. O, adulterous and sinful generation! You will receive a terrible conviction at the day of judgment from the universal and impartial Judge. "*He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him*" (John 1:11). Yes, the Lord and Creator of all is not received by us! He is not received into our houses, into our conversations; or else, when a man reads a religious book or prayers aloud, why does he sometimes do so as if against his will, reluctantly, his tongue hesitating? His mouth speaks not out of the abundance of the heart, but, because of inner constriction and emptiness, it can scarcely speak at all. Why is this so? It comes from the neglect of reading sacred books and praying, and from false shame sown in

the heart by the devil. What miserable creatures we men are! We are ashamed of that which should be regarded as the highest honor. O, ungrateful and evil-natured creatures! What torments do we not deserve for such conduct?

When the enemy does not succeed in hindering the Christian on the path of salvation through sorrow, affliction, poverty and various other privations, maladies, and misfortunes, then he rushes to the other extreme—he fights against him by using his own health, comfort, laziness, the weakness of his heart, the insensibility of his soul to spiritual blessings, or physical riches. O, how dangerous is this condition! It is more dangerous than the first state—the state of affliction, oppression, sickness, etc. In this state, we easily forget God; we cease to feel His mercies; we slumber and spiritually sleep. "*While the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight a cry was hold: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet Him!'* " (Matt 25:5, 6). But in affliction we involuntarily turn to God to be saved; we constantly feel that God is the God of our salvation—"the God Who saves"—that He is our life, our breath, our light, our strength. Thus, it is better for the Christian to live in some kind of affliction or another.

Prayer is spiritual breathing. When we pray, we breathe in the Holy Spirit, "*praying in the Holy Spirit*" (Jude 1:20). Thus, all church prayers are the breath of the Holy Spirit—spiritual air, as it were, but also light, spiritual fire, spiritual food, and spiritual clothing.

O Holy Spirit, all of us Christians are Your breath. After baptism, we are born in You, and by Your first creative inbreathing into the first man, we—all the races of the earth—are Your breath, Your birth! Have mercy on us, raise us up, Holy Spirit! Through Your inspiration, drive away from us the stench of our sins and passions and uproot all our sinful inclinations!

* * *

During prayer, always firmly believe and remember that every thought and word of yours may, undoubtedly, become deed. "*For with God, nothing will be impossible*" (Luke 1:37). "*But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit*" (1 Cor 6:17). This signifies that even your words will not be without power. "*All things are possible to him who believes*" (Mark 9:23). Take heed of your words; the word is precious. "*Every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment*" (Matt 12:36).

The Word is the expression of the truth; the very truth, existence, and action. The Word precedes every living creature, every object as the cause of their being—past, present, or future. "*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, says the Lord, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty*" (Rev 1:8). Thus speaks the creative Word of the Father. In Him—in the Word—is the cause of all creatures in the present, past, and future.

Why do we give the Cross such a high honor, that we commemorate its power in our prayers after asking for the intercession of the Mother of God and the heavenly powers, but before the saints (and sometimes even before the heavenly powers)? Because, after the Saviour's sufferings, the Cross became the sign of the Son of man, that is, the Cross signifies the Lord Himself, incarnate and suffering for our salvation. On the Cross, Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice to God the Father for our sins, and by the Cross He saved us from the works of the enemy. This is why we honor it with such reverence. Therefore, it will always be a great power for believers, delivering them from every evil, especially from the evil action of invisible enemies.

* * *

Light, air, and water are found in nature, mutually penetrate each other, but at the same time do not intermingle, each of them remaining what it was before. The light remains light, the air remains air, and the water remains water, each entirely preserving its own particular nature, but together forming a single substance. In a somewhat similar fashion, the Persons of the Holy Trinity are always united, not separated from each other. The Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father, while the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son. But at the same time, each Person has His own particular properties—God the Father is not begotten, not created, does not proceed; the Son is begotten; the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, while the Essence of the three Persons is one, a Divine, simple Essence. This similarity with the natural world is taken from the words of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who calls Himself the light of the world, and thus speaks of the Holy Spirit, comparing His actions to water: "*He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those*

believing in Him would receive" (John 7:38, 39). He also compared the Holy Spirit to the air or wind: "*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit*" (John 3:8). The Holy Church sings of the Holy Spirit: "*To the Holy Spirit belongs every all-saving cause: on whomsoever He through worthiness doth breathe, He quickly taketh him from earthly things."*[26]

For the Lord, to give flesh to any creature He desires, either animal or plant, is as simple as it is for me to sew a piece of clothing and put it on myself. "*Clothe me with skin and flesh, And knit me together with bones and sinews?*" (Job 10:11). What an infinite multitude and variety of material the Lord has, out of which He, the Creator, creates various clothing, that is, different shapes for His creatures (animals, birds, fish, reptiles, insects)! And us He will eventually clothe with light as bright as the sun in his kingdom! "*Upon Thy right hand did stand the queen; in garments of gold*" (Psalm 44:10). "*Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*" (Matt 13: 43). Now we are clothed with earth, water, air, warmth—this is our present vesture. And how wisely and conveniently all these elements are made and brought into union with our being! It is not heavy, and it is beautiful. O, Most-wise and Almighty Artist! Life-giving Artist! How beautiful, appropriate, and full of life is everything You have created! At Your Will, even the dust is enlivened and moves!

In prayer, the most important thing that we must labor over is living, clear-sighted faith in the Lord. See Him vividly before yourself and within you, then ask of Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit whatever you desire, and you will obtain it. Simply ask, without the slightest doubt, then your God will be everything to you, accomplishing in an instant great and wonderful acts, in the same way as the sign of the cross performs great miracles. Ask for both spiritual and material blessings not only for yourself, but for all believers, for the whole body of the Church, not separating yourself from other believers, but in spiritual union with them, as a member of the one great body of the Church of Christ, and loving all as your brethren or children in Christ (as the case may be). The heavenly Father will fill you with great peace and boldness.

* * *

When praying, pay steadfast attention to the words of the prayer, feeling them in your heart. Do not withdraw your mind from them to any other thoughts. When praying during divine services, during the celebration of the sacraments and the singing of the prayers and hymns for various occasions, lay the words of the prayers firmly on your heart, believing that not a single word is placed there in vain, that every one of them has power, that in each word dwells the Tri-hypostatic God Himself, "Who is everywhere present and fills all things." Think thus: I myself am nothing; the Lord does everything. When I speak, God the Word speaks in me. I need to worry about nothing, "*casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you*" (1 Pet 5:7).

When you read a worldly magazine or newspaper, it is light and agreeable reading, and you easily believe everything in it. But if you take up a religious periodical or book to read, especially one relating to church matters, or sometimes when you begin reading prayers, you feel a weight on your heart, you are tormented by doubt and unbelief, and you experience a sort of darkness and aversion. Many acknowledge this. Why does this happen? Of course, this is not due to the nature of the books themselves, but the nature of the readers, the nature of their hearts, and, chiefly, the devil, the enemy of mankind, the enemy of everything holy. "*The devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts*" (Luke 8:12). When we read worldly books, we do not bother him, and he does not bother us. But as soon as we take up religious books, as soon as we begin to think of our amendment and salvation, then we go against him, we irritate and torment him, and therefore he attacks us and torments us in turn. What can we do? We must not throw aside the good work, salvific reading, or prayers, but we must patiently endure, and in patience we will save our souls. "*By your patience possess your souls*" (Luke 21:19), says the Lord. The same applies to theaters and churches, to the stage and divine services. Many people find it pleasant to go to the theater, but find it oppressive and dull to go to church. Why? Because in the theater everything is well suited to please the sensual man, and when we are there, we do not provoke the devil, but please him; while he, in turn, allows us our pleasure and does not bother us. Make merry, my friends, he thinks, laugh, only do not remember God. On the other hand, in the church everything is intended to arouse faith, the fear of God, pious feelings, the sense of our sinfulness and corruption. Therefore, the devil sows doubt, weariness, despondency, evil, impure, and

blasphemous thoughts in our heart, so that the man is not content with himself and cannot stand for even an hour, and he gets away as quickly as possible. The theater and the church are polar opposites. The first is the temple of the world, the second the temple of God; the former is the temple of the devil, the latter the temple of the Lord.

When you are asked to pray for someone's deliverance from bodily death (e.g., drowning, sickness, fire, or any other disaster), commend the faith of those who ask you to do so by saying, "Blessed is your faith, and according to your faith may the Lord fulfill my unworthy, feeble prayer, and may He increase my faith."

* * *

You easily forgive yourself if you sin against God or against others; consequently, you should easily forgive other people's sins as well. Love your neighbor as yourself; forgive him much. "*How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times? … I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven*" (Matt 18:21, 22). By this, love is known. Even this is little for love to do. True love loves its enemies, does good to them which hate it, blesses them that curse it, and prays for them which despitefully use it (Luke 6:27, 28).

The Lord, to Whom all hearts are open, knowing our avarice and our miserliness in giving hospitality and kindness to other people who are not capable of returning the favor, has promised to reward us in the day of judgment, not only for giving food to the hungry and drink to the thirsty, for visiting the sick and those in prison, but even for a single cup of cold water given to a Christian—or to an unbeliever—in His name. "*Whosoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means wise lose his reward*" (Matt 10:42). O, the loving-kindness and mercy of Christ! Who, after this, will not be ashamed of the hardness of his heart and his shameful avarice!

The devil, as a spiritual, simple being, can hinder and wound the soul by a single instantaneous thought of wickedness, doubt, blasphemy, impatience, irritation, malice; or by an instantaneous attachment of the heart to anything earthly; or by the passion of the eyes, adultery, and other passions. He can fan the spark of sin, with his typical cunning and malice, into a flame that rages with diabolical strength within a person. We must

stand fast and strengthen ourselves in God's truth every way we can, rejecting the lies, illusions, and malice of the devil at their very inception. We should be all watchfulness, all eyes, hard as adamant, invincible, firm, and invulnerable. O, glory, glory to Your victory, Lord! Thus may I conquer, by the power of Your might, the invisible and visible enemies, all the days of my life, until my last breath. Amen. O, simplicity of faith, do not leave me.

* * *

Do not be passionately attached to food and drink, rich clothing, spacious and richly decorated houses, luxurious furniture, not even for the sake of your health! Do not even have the least attachment to your own life; give up your whole life to the will of the Lord, saying, "*for to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Phil 1:21). "*He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life*" (John 12:25). Attachment to this temporary life, to one's own health, leads to many deviations from God's commandments, to the indulgence of the flesh, to breaking the fasts, to evading the conscientious fulfillment of the duties connected with our calling, to despondency, impatience, irritability. Never sleep before saying the evening prayers, lest your heart should become coarse from ill-timed sleep, and lest the enemy hinder it through stony insensibility during prayer. "*Be sober, be vigilant*" (1 Pet 5:8). "*Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation*" (Matt 26:41). "*Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming*" (Matt 25:13). "*Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, or at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—And what I say to you, I say to all, Watch!*" (Mark 13:35, 37).

My brothers, pray to the Mother of God when the storm of enmity and anger arises in your house. She, Who is all-merciful and all-powerful, can easily pacify the hearts of men. Peace and love proceed from the one God, as from their Source, and the Theotokos is united with God. As the Mother of Christ the Peace, She zealously prays for the peace of the whole world, and above all, for the peace of all Christians. She has the all-merciful power to drive away from us the spirits of evil—those ever-vigilant and ardent sowers of enmity and anger among people, while to all who have recourse

with faith and love to Her powerful protection, She speedily sends peace and love. Be zealous yourselves also to preserve faith and love in your hearts, for if you do not care for this, then you will be unworthy of the intercession of the Mother of God. Be also most fervent and most reverent worshipers of the Mother of the almighty Lord, for it is truly meet to bless Her, the ever-blessed, the entirely blameless Mother of our God, the highest of all creatures, the Intercessor for the whole race of mankind. Strive to train yourself in the spirit of humility, for She Herself was more humble than any mortal, and looks with love only upon the humble. "*He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant,*" said She to Elisabeth, of "*God My Saviour*" (Luke 1:48, 47).

Do not let the devil sow enmity and anger in your heart against your neighbor. Do not let these feelings find a home in your heart; otherwise, your malice, even if not expressed in words but shown only in your glance, will still infect the soul of your brother (for nothing is as infectious as anger, since it easily infects especially those who have an abundance of sleepless malice in their hearts), thereby fanning the spark of evil inside them into a conflagration. Be watchful: "*with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you*" (Matt 7:2). "*For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light*" (Luke 8:17).

Cultivate the Christian art of doing good, of blessing, with your whole heart, those who curse you. By doing this, you will please your Lord Christ, Who said, "Bless them that curse you. Love your enemies" sincerely, not regarding their anger, but respecting in them the image of God, in which they are created, and seeing in them your own self. "*Do good to those who hate you,*" as did the Son of the Heavenly Father, Who is kind even "*to the unthankful and evil*" (Luke 6:27, 35), believing that you will overcome evil with good, because good is always more powerful than evil. "*Pray for those who spitefully use you*" (Luke 6:28), so that through your prayer you may save them also, by God's grace, from the evil malice and the snares of the devil, and save yourself from misfortune as well. "*Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back*" (Luke 6:30), for everything comes from God, and, should the Lord desire, He can take everything away from you. Remember that you yourself have come naked out of your mother's womb, and naked shall you return thither (Job 1:21), and you shall not take anything away with you. If you

will thus live, you will gain for yourself the priceless treasure of peace and love, and you will live long on the earth, for "*Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth*" and "*shall be refreshed in the multitude of peace*" (Matt 5:5; Psalm 36:6).

I look only at You, O Lord, with the eyes of my heart. I believe in You without doubting. You Yourself know what is best for me. You are the treasury of every blessing, You are mercy, wisdom, and omnipotence abundantly flowing on all creation. Thus I also look to You, O Holy Virgin. Intercede for me and have mercy on me!

* * *

Do not grow despondent and feeble in spirit, seeing the constant struggle of evil against good within yourself, but like a good and valiant soldier of Jesus Christ, the Foundation of our ascetic labors, struggle courageously against evil, looking at the crown prepared by the Lord for all who conquer evil in this world and in their flesh. "*To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My Throne*" (Rev 3:21).

In order not to remember the malice of your neighbor, but to forgive him completely, remember that you yourself are not free from anger, as well as all other passions. Recognize your neighbor's infirmities and passions as your own: "*forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you*" (Eph 4:32). O, how sinful I am, how loathsome I am in the sight of God, man, and myself because of my sins! Who can be more loathsome to me than myself? Truly nobody! Compared to me, all are righteous. I must be mercilessly angry with myself, and I must consider it a special happiness to forgive my neighbor's trespasses and offenses against me, an unworthy one, so that the long-suffering, bountiful, and merciful Lord will forgive me even some of my trespasses. I must remember that it is only in this way that I can become deserving of the Lord's mercy, otherwise I would have died long ago.

O, how full of misery, difficulty, and heaviness is this earthly life! From morning till night, daily, we must wage grievous warfare against the carnal passions, fighting against our own soul, "*against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*" (Eph 6:12), whose craft and subtlety are immeasurably evil, diabolically artful, indefatigable! O,

Sweetest Saviour, You Who call to Yourself all who labor and are heavy laden to give them rest! You see that our hearts are wasted from this daily struggle and affliction, we are unnerved, weakened, we walk like shadows. Our evil enemies continually vex our souls and do everything they can to draw us into the abyss of despair. Stretch forth, Master, Your mighty right hand, and deliver us from the snares of the dragon of time immemorial, the murderer of men. "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me*" (Luke 9:23).But who is the daily cause of our cross, our afflictions and distresses? The old carnal man and the devil with his never-ending snares.

Calling on the Lord while struggling against any passion, or after having committed a sin and repented of it, gives peace to our doubting hearts and a wonderful brightness to our countenance. "*Thou hast put gladness in my heart; The light of Thy countenance hath been signed upon us, O Lord*" (Psalm 4:8, 7). O, how bright does our countenance become when we look at the God of our hearts through the exertion of our faith, with the eyes of our heart! Truly, the Lord Himself is with us then, as He said: "*Call upon Me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee*" (Psalm 49:15). "*I am with him in trouble, I will deliver him, and bring him to glory*" (Psalm 90:15). O, You Most-bountiful and Long-suffering God, You Who are ready to pardon unto seventy times seven the sins and transgressions of all those who sincerely repent and ask Your forgiveness, have mercy upon us who every hour offend You many times. Amen.

What infinite nothingness do our food and drink represent on the one hand, and what infinite wonder does the man who is fed by them represent on the other! Is it not the greatest insanity for man, for this image of God, for this partaker of the divine nature, for whom "*God may be all in all*" (1 Cor 15:28) to begrudge any other person food, drink, clothing, dwelling, or anything else earthly? Let the dust be dust, but let the immortal image of the immortal God be always exalted and preferred before everything earthly, corruptible, and transitory! Therefore, let us not spare anything for the sake of our neighbor! O, what a great honor it is to feed, to clothe, to give rest to the image of God! Most-gracious and Most-generous God! Fill our hearts with mercy and generosity!

God's saints had "*the eyes of your understanding being enlightened*" (Eph 1:18), and with these eyes they clearly saw the needs of our sin-corrupted nature. They understood our need to pray, they knew what to ask

for, what to give thanks for, how to praise the Lord, leaving us the most perfect examples of prayers for various occasions. O, how beautiful these prayers are! Sometimes we do not feel and do not know their value, while, on the contrary, we know the value of food and drink, fashionable attire, well-furnished rooms, theaters, music, worldly literature, especially novels —those florid, vapid masses of words—and (alas!) we trample underfoot the precious pearls of prayer. While everything worldly finds a copious refuge in the hearts of most people, prayer (alas!) does not find even a narrow corner in our hearts. It does not fit at all. And when it begs us to let it in, we cast it out like a beggar, like the man who did not have a wedding garment.

Rejoice at every opportunity to show kindness to your neighbor as a true Christian who strives to store up as many good works as possible, especially the treasures of love. Do not rejoice when others show you kindness and love—consider yourself unworthy of it—but rejoice when an occasion presents itself for you to show others love. Show love simply, without any evil thoughts, without any trivial, worldly, covetous calculation, remembering that love is God Himself. Remember that He sees all your ways, and He sees all the thoughts and movements of your heart.

* * *

Do not let any opportunity to pray for any man pass, either at his request or at the request of his relatives, friends, admirers, or acquaintances. The Lord looks favorably at the prayer of our love and at our boldness before him. Moreover, prayer for others is very beneficial to the person who prays for others. It purifies his heart, strengthens faith and hope in God, and awakens his love for God and neighbor. When praying, speak thus: Lord, it is possible for You to do this or that to this servant of Yours. Do this for him, for Your name is Merciful Lover of Mankind and Almighty. "*If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts [not only] to your children [but also to strangers], how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*" (Matt 7:11).

Glory to You, O Lord, our Father, You Who most wisely tests my love for You and my neighbor! Do not leave me without the temptations that are necessary and beneficial to me, according to Your wisdom and truth, not for a single day of my life. May they confirm, strengthen, and increase my love

for You and my neighbor, and may I not appear poor and empty before Your face on the day of judgment!

* * *

When I, being a weak man, wish to do anything within the limits of my capability, I am able to do it. For example, if I want to write a book, I can write it; if I want to cure an illness, I can cure it; if I want to build a house or a church, I can build such a house or church; or if I say to another man, "Come," he comes; "Go," he goes; "Do this," he does it. If this is so, then cannot God, the Almighty, do everything that He desires? "*But our God is in heaven and on earth; He hath done all whatsoever He pleased*" (Psalm 113:11). If sometimes a man only says two words, desiring that something come to pass, and it really does (though, perhaps, not at once, but after a certain time), then will not everything that is commanded by the word of the Creator be done at once? Will not everything that He desires be done at a single word from Him? "*For He spake, and they came to be; He commanded, and they were created*" (Psalm 148:5). We are not creators of men, yet they do so many things at our command. We are not creators of things, yet our desire and action can mold them into thousands of shapes, serving our countless requirements and pleasures. We do not create matter, but we create both large and small objects from matter. Cannot, therefore, the Creator, Who is everywhere present and fills all things, at Whose word all things came from nonexistence into being, by Whose thought, by Whose will, and by Whose word all the infinite varieties of things were created and exist, create anything He desires? If a physician can sometimes bring back to life a half-dead person, thanks to his knowledge and the skillful, precise treatment of the illness, cannot the Creator of physicians and medicine cure every illness merely with His will and His word? Cannot the Creator raise the dead with a single word? Let us ascribe glory to Him, we of little faith, and let us say to Him from our hearts, "All things are possible for You, Lord, and nothing is impossible for You. Amen."

O Almighty Sovereign, Whose will reigns over all things, the whole visible and invisible world, grant that I may unceasingly glorify You with a simple faith in Your infinite power. Give me the faith that will not be ashamed, a firm hope, and unfeigned love for You and my neighbor.

* * *

"*He [God] is before all things, and in Him all things consist*" (Col 1:17). A great, immeasurable meaning is contained in these words. They explain the name "I Am that I Am," by which the Lord named Himself to Moses. For "I Am" signifies Him Who exists before all things, and by Whom all things exist. These words show the infinite omnipotence and grace and immeasurable wisdom of the Lord our God. "*Great is our Lord, and great is His power, and of His wisdom there is no end*" (Psalm 146:5).

When you are at a social gathering and you call a person known to you and he comes to you; or if you ask one or many people subservient to you to do anything for you within the limit of their ability, and they fulfill your request, then be assured that in God's Church, in that great house of God divided into two parts—the heavenly and the earthly—any of the members of the Church in Heaven whom you call will come to your spiritual help, as is appropriate to their goodness and the abundance of their love. Ask him to do anything for you, especially anything relating to the Kingdom and righteousness of God, and he will do it through his close association with God, the Source of goodness and power. God's saints also hear you in the same way as, for instance, the whole congregation hears you when you pray or speak the Word aloud, for they are in the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit is everywhere present, and fills all things.

* * *

Our self-love and pride manifest themselves especially in impatience and irritability when we cannot bear the slightest unpleasantness caused by others, or any obstacles placed in our way by other people, or even by objects, whether done lawfully or unlawfully, intentionally or unintentionally. Our self-love and pride would like everything to be as we wish, to be surrounded by every honor and comfort of this temporal life. We would like all men, and even (how great is our pride!) all of nature itself to speedily and silently obey our will. At the same time, we ourselves are very slow to faith and every good work. We are slow to please the one Master of all. Christian! You must be absolutely humble, meek, and long-suffering, remembering that you are clay, dust, nothingness; that you are impure; that everything good that you have is from God; that your life, your breath, and

everything you possess are God's gifts; that for your sins of disobedience and intemperance you must now redeem your future blessedness in Paradise with the long-suffering which is indispensable in this world of imperfections and innumerable transgressions of the fallen people living among us and forming the many members of the one sin-corrupted human race. "*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ*" (Gal 6:2). He who is impatient and irritable does not know himself and the human race, and is unworthy of the name of Christian. In saying this, I pronounce judgment against myself, for I am the first of those who are afflicted with impatience and irritability.

Our life is a children's game, only it is not innocent, but sinful, because, even though we have a strong mind and the knowledge of our life's purpose, we neglect its purpose and occupy ourselves with frivolous, pointless matters. And thus, our life is a childish, unpardonable game. We find pleasure in food and drink, filling ourselves to repletion, instead of only using them for the necessary nourishment of our body and the maintenance of our bodily life. We find pleasure in dress, instead of only decently covering our body and protecting it from the harmful effect of the elements. We amuse ourselves with silver and gold, admiring them in treasuries or using them for objects of luxury and pleasure, instead of using them only for our real needs and sharing our superfluity with those in need. We amuse ourselves with our houses and the variety of furniture in them, decorating them richly and exquisitely, instead of merely having a secure and decent roof to protect us from the elements and other things necessary and suitable for domestic use. We amuse ourselves with our intellectual gifts, with our minds, imagination, using them only to serve sin and the vanity of this world. In other words, we only serve earthly and corruptible things, instead of using them before all and above all to serve God; to learn to know Him, the all-wise Creator; to pray, supplicate, petition, give thanks and praise to Him; to show mutual love and respect; and only partly to serve this world, which will someday entirely pass away. We amuse ourselves with our knowledge of worldly vanity, and to acquire this knowledge, we waste precious time, given to us for our preparation for eternity. We frequently amuse ourselves with our work and business, with our duties, fulfilling them heedlessly, carelessly, and frivolously, using them for our own covetous, earthly purposes. We amuse ourselves with beautiful human faces, or the fair, weaker sex, and often use them for the sport of our

passions. We amuse ourselves with time, which should be wisely utilized for redeeming eternity, and not for games and various pleasures. Finally, we amuse ourselves with our own selves, making idols out of ourselves, before which we bow down, and before which we expect others to bow down. Who can sufficiently describe and deplore our accursedness, our great, enormous vanity, the great misery into which we voluntarily throw ourselves? What answer shall we give to our immortal King, Christ our God, Who shall come again in the glory of His Father to judge both the living and the dead, to reveal the secret thoughts of all hearts, and receive from us our answer for every word and deed. How terrible it will be for us who bear the name of Christ, but have none of the spirit of Christ in us; who bear the name of Christ, but do not follow the teachings of the Gospel! It will be terrible for us who "*neglect so great salvation!*" (Heb 2:3). It will be terrible for us who love the present, fleeting, deceptive life, and neglect the inheritance of the life that follows after the death of our corruptible body beyond this fleshly veil!

One of the infirmities of the human spirit is its slowness to believe and its slothfulness in acquiring knowledge of the truth, especially the truth of faith and piety. What do young people, and even older people, study most sluggishly and slothfully? The truth of faith and piety. This is proved by much experience.

* * *

In order that men should esteem and love each other and not be proud or arrogant to each other, the most-wise Lord has given to different men different natural and God-given advantages, so that they may have need of each other. In this manner, each one of us must acknowledge his own infirmity and humble himself before God and man.

* * *

Lord, You Yourself have said with Your most-pure lips, "*you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect*" (Matt 5:48). I long to be perfect. Be therefore every perfection for me, for You have also said, "*for without Me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5).

All prayers assume the great poverty and misery of our fallen nature. They also assume that the Lord is the ever-flowing source of every

perfection and blessing, that He is our inexhaustible treasury of blessings. Truly, we must have poverty of spirit during prayer and at all times. "*Blessed are the poor in spirit*" (Matt 5:3).

Consider how wonderful is man: "*God abides in him, and he in God*" (1 John 4:15), so that in a pious Christian it is as though Christ Himself resides. "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal 2:20), because the whole soul becomes Christ's, as iron in a furnace itself becomes fiery like a burning coal. It is all fire, all light, all warmth.

Preserve a meek and peace-loving disposition toward your brother, even when he deprives you of all your possessions, through cunning or falsehood, or even unintentionally. Show then that you love God's image in him more than anything earthly and perishable, that your "*love never fails*" (Cor 13:8). "*And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back*" (Luke 6:30). "*If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also*" (Matt 5:40). Do not let the enemy shame you for laying your hopes on such earthly dust as money and food, more than on God, but instead shame him through your firm trust in God and His Holy Word. For "*man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Matt 4:4). Pay attention: "by every word." For every word of the Lord Creator can sustain your life, just as every word can create and transform thousands of creatures. "*For He spake, and they came to be; He commanded, and they were created*" (Psalm 32:9). Thus, at His word He brought from nonexistence into being the myriad immortal heavenly hosts, and having sanctified them by the Holy Spirit, He strengthens and supports them in their existence. Do not foolishly lower the dignity of your immortal spirit by vainly trusting in earthly dust. Say, "My trust is in God," or "*My hope is the Father, my refuge is the Son, my protection is the Holy Spirit. O, Holy Trinity, glory to Thee!*"[27] And yet how many of us become irritated and lose our tempers when we are deprived, not of our last coin, but only of some small part of our property, nowhere near to total deprivation! How much agitation, anger, malice, bitter reproaches, complaints, sometimes even curses! Righteous God! Can this dross we call money, or this food and drink, produce such storms in our Christian souls, in us who know the words of our sweetest Saviour? "*Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on…. Look a the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds*

them…. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt 6:25, 26, 33). Or, "*one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses*" (Luke 12:15). My God! What have we come to? How are we better than heathens in our way of life? Where is our faith, our trust in God, our love for our neighbor? O, what satanic pride! O, what shame! Heavenly Father! You who know what things we need and give them to us before we even ask (Matt 6:8), have mercy on us unfaithful, ungrateful, and evil-natured ones. Lord, we hear Your merciful words: "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Heb 13:5), but being daily tempted by earthly blessings, we do not heed them, and transgress Your will.

Do not fear bodily privations, but fear spiritual privations. Do not fear, do not be faint-hearted, do not be irritated when you are deprived of money, food, drink, enjoyments, clothes, dwelling, even of your body itself; but fear when the enemy deprives your soul of faith, trust, and love for God and your neighbor, when he sows hatred, enmity, attachment to earthly things, pride, and other sins in your heart. "*Do not fear those [men] who kill the body but cannot kill the soul*" (Matt 10:28).

"*But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail*" (Psalm 101:28). Thus it is said of the immutability of God. If only you, man, would always be the same today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow and so on, and if only you would not change in a thousand ways like a kaleidoscope! If only you would be always peaceful, kind, simple, amiable, patient, industrious, benevolent, and generous! But you can be so, if by heartfelt faith and love you unite yourself to the Immutable One. "*For I am the Lord, I do not change*" (Ma 3:6). "I preserve My servants from falling into evil, for I am the source of mercy, benefiting those who serve Me worthily."[28]

Peace is the wholeness and health of the soul; to lose peace is to lose spiritual health.

* * *

Revere, with all the powers of your soul, all the sacraments, and say to yourself with respect to every sacrament before its celebration: "This is God's mystery. I myself am only the unworthy witness or partaker of it." Otherwise, our proud intellect even wishes to search out God's mystery, and

if unable to penetrate it, it rejects the mystery as not fitting within the small measure of our intellect.

* * *

If a single word of an earthly king causes great projects to come to pass in his kingdom (he speaks and the work begins and is accomplished), then will not the word of the Lord of all material and spiritual, visible and invisible creatures, accomplish everything He desires? He speaks, and shall it not be created? He speaks, and shall it not be done? O, Almighty Power, able to accomplish everything in a single moment, do not leave us on account of our sins, and above all on account of our incredulity and despair, to be tormented by our own infirmities, lest we be destroyed like earthen vessels. Grant that we may believe with all our hearts in Your Almighty Power, and that we may never doubt in the fulfillment of our every proper request.

* * *

All visible nature, all its parts, great and small, down to the very smallest, at every instant remind us that everything proceeds from the Lord and exists and moves in Him. Everything is or comes into being through Him and at each moment obeys Him.

* * *

O, how low has our nature fallen through our passion for eating! O, thrice-accursed Satan, who has thrust us, and still thrusts us, into thousands of evils through eating! O, food and drink that so powerfully tempt us! How long will we be allured by you and stake our very life on you? When will we engrave deeply upon our hearts the Saviour's words: "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Matt 4:4), and when will we bring these words into our life and actions? How long will our greed, self-indulgence, overeating, and drunkenness continue? How long will our abominable avarice and love of money continue? How long will our pride, animosity, and malice against our neighbor on account of money, dress, houses, food, and drink continue? Thousands of Satan's lies—through food, dress, and money—reveal

themselves to the eyes of our heart, and yet we still continue to be allured by his enticements as though they are something real, useful to us, while in fact we are wasting our energy on little more than destructive illusion, pernicious to both our spirit and body. Brothers, do not believe the enemy's lies, not for one single moment, when the matter concerns food and drink, however plausible they may appear to be. "*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*" (Matt 6:33). "*I did not speak to you concerning bread—but beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees …, which is hypocrisy*" (Matt 16:11; Luke 12:1) in matters of faith and piety. Pay the utmost attention to faith and piety. "*Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you*" (John 6:27). Give away even the last that you have, if there is need of it, remembering the words of the Saviour: "*If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also*" (Matt 5:40). In other words, give away the last that you have.

"*According to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers*" (2 Tim 4:3). Is not this what men of the world, and even many of the clergy, are now doing? Do they not choose for themselves teachers that flatter their hearing? They do not learn of the one Teacher, Christ, from His Gospel and His Church; but they learn of worldly journalists, novelists, poets, actors, and exclaim, "Ah, how interesting all this is! How instructive it all is!" They are saying, if not in words, then in deeds: "We have no need of either the Gospel or the Church, with its services, its sacraments, and preaching of God's Word. We have such good, such most moral teachers." Lord Jesus! What have we come to? They have cast Your words aside.

Do not be despondent and do not fall into despair when you feel the deadly breath and foment of malice and evil, impatience and blasphemy, or any weakness from impure thoughts within your soul, but instead fight against them unremittingly and endure valiantly, calling with all your heart upon the Lord Jesus, the Conqueror of hell. Humble yourself deeply, deeply, acknowledging yourself, from the depths of your soul, as the first of sinners, unworthy of human fellowship; and the Lord, seeing your humility and your struggle, will help you. Call also to your help the speedy Intercessor, the most-holy Virgin, the Mother of God, saying, "*Heal, most*

pure Lady, the many painful wounds of my soul, and strike the enemies constantly fighting against me."[29]

If you truly call God your Father, then trust in Him as the one Father, most merciful, almighty, most wise, unchangeable in His love and in His perfections. Trust Him to grant you the blessings of this temporal life, but especially trust Him to grant you future blessings in Christ Jesus. Engrave these words deeply on your heart: "God is my Father. Our Father, Who art in heaven …." But since, through the love of the Heavenly Father, you have become the child of God, as one having come forth from Him, as possessing reason and free will, you should do everything you can to attain the blessed and eternal heavenly inheritance. You should know and always remember that you are a fallen being. And since you fell possessing reason and freedom, by your own will, then with that same reason, which is enlightened by the light of the Word of God and the divine light of the Holy Spirit, with that same free will, strengthened by the grace of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus, rise up from your fall and go forward without stopping toward the heavenly, eternal life, despising all earthly things as perishable and quickly passing away. More than anything, take care not to attach yourself to silver and gold, to food and drink, through which such a depth of evil has fallen upon the entire human race.

* * *

Thank our most speedy Intercessor, our Lady the Mother of our Lord, the most blameless, ever blessed Virgin Mary, for saving us from the harassment and attacks of the devil, as we fervently asked her in prayer. Look up to Her with the eyes of your heart in the Holy Spirit, Who is everywhere present and fillest all things. Look up at Her Who is so near to your heart, and call upon Her: "Most-speedy Intercessor, Mary, Mother of God, save me from the enemy, the assailant." And immediately, in an instant, She will save you according to the faith of your heart, according to your soul's trust in Her, and the oppression, the fire, the heavy despondency will fall away and leave you. It is only necessary to imagine and firmly believe that the Holy Spirit is everywhere, in every place, that He is a simple Being, that through Him all heaven is near us with all its angels and saints, as on the palm of our hand, so that we have only to call upon the Lord, or upon the Virgin Mother of God, or any saint from the depth of the

heart, with clear-sighted faith, with heartfelt repentance for the sins by which we are bound by the enemy or by which we have bound ourselves voluntarily, and our salvation will immediately be accomplished. Marvelous is the saving power of our Lady; it flows into the heart like a healing balm, or like fragrant, life-giving air, or like calming water. Only look at Her with the eyes of your heart, trusting in Her mercy and help. But it is difficult to look at Her with heartfelt, clear-sighted faith, just as it is difficult to look at the Lord Jesus Christ or the saints, for the enemy does everything he can to stand like a hard, high, dark wall between our souls and the Lord, the Mother of God, the angels and saints. The accursed one does not allow the eyes of the heart to see the Lord or His saints; he darkens our heart in every way; he scatters faith, oppressing, burning, and darkening us inwardly. We must look at all his attacks as illusions and falsehood, and break through this imaginary wall to reach the Lord, His Holy Mother, or His saints. As soon as you break through this wall, you will immediately be saved. "*Your faith has made you well*" (Matt 9:22).

Say inwardly, with your whole heart, "The Lord is everything to me; I myself am nothing; I am powerless, I am infirm." "*For without Me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5), says the Lord Himself, adding: "For I am everything to you." Be firmly convinced of this every moment of your life, and run to the Lord absolutely in all situations, trusting to obtain from Him everything necessary for your salvation, and for this temporal life as well.

If the Holy Virgin, the Mother of God, through Her union with God, and through Her unprecedented service to the Lord of all, most speedily becomes everything to all who ask for Her intercession with faith and love, delivering them from every evil and bestowing on them everything that leads to their salvation, then will not the Lord Himself do still more? Only do not have weak faith, do not be cold to Him in your soul and insensible as a stone, but kindle your faith, your gratitude for God's benefits, the sincere recognition of your sins, and your great love for your Saviour, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, Who loves you with an immeasurable love.

* * *

When praying to the Lord, the Mother of God, or the saints, always remember that the Lord will give you according to your heart—"*grant thee according to thy heart*" (Psalm 19:5). However the heart is, such will be the

gift. If you pray with faith, sincerely, with all your heart, not hypocritically, then a gift will be given you by the Lord according to your faith and the fervor of your heart. On the contrary, the colder your heart is, the more incredulous and hypocritical it is, the more useless will be your prayer; not only this, but it will also anger the Lord, Who is a Spirit, and seeks to be worshipped in spirit and in truth (John 4:23, 24). Therefore, whether you call upon the Lord Himself, His Mother, the angels, or the saints, call upon them with your whole heart. When you pray for anyone living or departed, pray for them with your whole heart, pronouncing their names with heartfelt fervor. When you pray that any spiritual blessing may be granted you or anyone else, when you pray that you or anyone near to you may be delivered from any misfortunes, sins, passions, or bad habits, pray with your whole heart, desiring the blessings you pray for, resolving firmly to forsake sins, passions, and sinful habits; and the Lord will grant you the gift according to your heart. "*You will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you*" (John 15:7). You see, therefore, that it is absolutely necessary to wish and long for that which you ask, for only then will you obtain it. "*Pray one for another, that you may be healed*" (James 5:16).

Be kindly disposed in heart, word, and deed, ready at every time to serve others without the slightest vexation or irritability, remembering the words of the Saviour: "*whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant*" (Matt 20:26).

Firmly believe that the Lord, at all times, gives everything to you. During prayer, He is the power and the fulfillment of each of your words, through the power of the Holy Spirit. During pious conversation, He is your living water, the ardent flow of your words. At all times, He is every good thing to you. Be free from worries in the presence of your Lord. He has enclosed you round about with Himself. He fills you completely and knows all your thoughts, all your needs and inclinations, and if you live in Him with faith and love, no evil shall befall you. "*The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing*" (Phil 4:5–6).

God, as the only One Who Is—omnipresent, simple—can create or transform everything in a single instant, as it was with the wonders in Egypt. The Almighty can do all things.

* * *

Through domestic, or rather mercenary, pride and incomprehensible wickedness, we often do not deign even to speak to those whom we feed and support, antagonizing them, instead of humbling ourselves before them as their servants, according to the words of the Lord: "*Whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant*" (Matt 20:26). If we acted thus instead, we would double the recompense of the Lord by sincerely and guilelessly serving Him in the person of the least of His brethren. O, meek and humble-hearted Creator, Giver of Life, Redeemer, our Provider, and Preserver, Lord Jesus! Teach us love, meekness, and humility through Your Holy Spirit, and strengthen us in those virtues that are most pleasing to You, so that Your rich gifts will not make our hearts proud, so that we will never imagine that it is we ourselves who feed, provide, and support anyone. You are the universal Provider, feeding, providing, supporting, and preserving everyone. Under the wings of Your mercy, generosity, and loving kindness all are provided for and given rest, not under our wings, for we ourselves need to be protected by the shelter of Your wings every moment of our life. Our eyes are fixed on You, our God, as "*the eyes of servants are upon the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maid are upon the hand of her mistress, even so are our eyes upon the Lord our God, until He have pity upon us*" (Psalm 122:2). Amen.

Be firmly convinced that every word, especially those pronounced during prayer, can be accomplished, remembering that the author of the word is God the Word, that our God Himself, worshipped in the Holy Trinity, is expressed by the three words or names: The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit. Each word indicates being; each word can become being and action. Therefore, revere the word and value it. Remember that as the Son of God, the Hypostatic Word of God, is always united with the Father and the Holy Spirit, so the Father, the Supreme Wisdom, His creative Word, and the Holy Spirit, the Accomplisher, are present by virtue of their omnipresence in the words of Holy Scripture, or in prayers, or in the writings of the Holy Fathers. This is why no word is in vain, but has (or should have) power in itself. It will be terrible for those who speak idly, for they will have to answer for their idle talk! "*For with God nothing will be impossible*" (Luke 1:37). Power and accomplishment are, in general, the properties of the word. So should it also be with the words of men.

The Holy Spirit accomplishes all wonders and miracles. By the same Spirit, power is given to one, while another receives the effect of this power.

Only speak with faith. The accomplishment of your word is not your worry, but the work of the Holy Spirit.

* * *

Firmly believe that you always think, feel, speak, move, and act in God, in His bosom, so to speak: "*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him*" (John 6:56). He has enclosed you round about; He fills you and He knows you. "*Thou hast made me and hast laid Thy hand upon me*" (Psalm 138:5), says the holy prophet and King David. The Mother of God, all the holy angels, and all the saints are also in God. Therefore, who is nearer, who can be more closely associated with believing Christians than the angels and saints? Call upon God Himself, the Lord of everything, as well as His saints, with faith, hope, and love, asking them to intercede before God for you. Ask the angels and saints to pray to God for you as you would ask a living person—standing face to face with them, firmly believing that they too stand face to face with your heart.

Always remember that you are accursed, poor, needy, blind, and naked without God, that God is everything to you. He is your righteousness, your sanctification, your riches, your clothing, your life, your breath, your everything.

* * *

The Body and Blood of Christ are preeminently body and blood, because in each smallest particle of the Body and Blood rests the entire Christ, filling every part. It is not so in the human body. In the Body and Blood of Christ, every particle, every drop is Christ completely, ever indivisible, One and the Same.

* * *

What is mercy? Mercy is to love our enemies, to bless those who curse us, to do good to those who hate us, do us harm, and drive us away, to defend those who are persecuted, and so on.

* * *

God is the most approachable and responsive Being in His generosity to His creatures, especially to intelligent beings. If air and light, because of their thinness, move and communicate themselves easily to everything that is capable of absorbing or receiving them, then shall not the Lord of all things, the omnipresent Spirit, all-merciful, infinite, almighty, move and communicate Himself infinitely more easily than these inanimate, unintelligent, material, created things? O! How quickly the Lord helps all those who believe in Him and seek Him! "*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell whence it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit*" (John 3:8). If human beings are by nature responsive, then how much more so is God! If a father and a mother give what is needful to their children (being corrupted in nature), then "*how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*" (Matt 7:11). "*But do not forget to do good and to share*" (Heb 13:16).

If Christ is in you through the frequent communion of the Holy Mysteries, then be yourself completely like Christ—meek, humble, long-suffering, full of love, without attachment to earthly things, meditating upon heavenly things, obedient, wise. Have His spirit unfailingly within you. Do not be proud, impatient, partial to earthly things, avaricious, and covetous.

* * *

Firmly direct the eyes of your heart toward God, and as you contemplate Him, ask Him anything you desire in the name of Jesus Christ, and it shall be given to you. In a single moment, God will be everything to you, for He is a simple Being, above all time and space, and in the moments of true faith, of heartfelt union with Him, He will accomplish everything for you that is necessary for your own salvation, or that of your neighbor. At that moment, you will be a partaker of the divine through most intimate union with Him: "*I said, Ye are gods*" (Psalm 81:6). At such moments, there is no distance between God and you, and neither will there be any distance between your word and its realization. As soon as you speak, it will be accomplished, just as God Himself "*spake, and they came to be; He commanded, and they were created*" (Psalm 32:9). This is true when referring to the sacraments as well as spiritual prayer. In general, everything in the sacraments is done for the sake of the grace of the priesthood with

which the priest is invested, for the sake of the great High Priest Himself, Christ, Whose image the priest bears in himself. Therefore, although some priests are unworthy of their office, even though they may have weaknesses, even though they may be suspicious, of little faith, or distrustful, nevertheless, God's Mysteries are speedily accomplished, in the twinkling of an eye.

God the Father, acting in our mind and heart through His Hypostatic Word (expressed in our words by the Holy Spirit Who rests in the Hypostatic Word) and through the words of faith, trust, meekness, and love proceeding from our lips, accomplishes in an instant, once and for all time, the wonderful acts predetermined since the creation of the world—our regeneration, sanctification, strengthening, spiritual nourishment, and healing in Christ—even if the preparatory rites for these sacraments are very long—for God is a simple, Almighty Being. For example, the change of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ is accomplished immediately after the utterance of the words: "Make this bread the precious Body of Thy Christ, and that which is in this cup the precious Blood of Thy Christ, changing them by Thy Holy Spirit." After these last words, and after the sign of the cross with the priest's hand, the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, but not before, for the divine Omnipotence awaits the word of the priest cooperating with Him. "*For we are God's fellow workers*" (1 Cor 3:9). This blessing, the sign of the cross in the name of the Lord, signifies that the mystery is accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the name of Jesus Christ, and for the sake of Jesus Christ, at His intercession, by the goodwill of God the Father.

During the celebration of divine services and the sacraments, the servant of God should be firmly convinced that whatever he thinks and says will be accomplished. It is so easy for the Lord to fulfill our requests, to create or to change anything according to our words. Let this conviction be as easy and natural to you as breathing, as seeing, as hearing. You have a thousand times experienced that this is really so; you have yourself experienced that there is no interval of time between the words: "*He spake, and they came to be; He commanded, and they were created*" (Psalm 32:9). These words are true in all their power. Imbibe this conviction with your food and drink, with your breathing.

The Liturgy is the supper, the table of God's love for mankind. Around the Lamb of God all gather together on the holy diskos—the living and the

dead, saints and sinners, the Church triumphant and the Church militant.

* * *

There is nothing impossible to those who believe; living and unshaken faith can accomplish great miracles in a moment. Besides, even without our sincere and firm faith, miracles are still accomplished, such as the miracles of the sacraments, for God's Mysteries are always accomplished, even though we doubt or refuse to believe at the time of its celebration. "*Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect?*" (Rom 3:3). Our wickedness will not overpower the unspeakable goodness and mercy of God; our stupidity will not overpower God's wisdom, nor will our infirmity overturn God's omnipotence.

The Church is the eternal truth, because she is united with Truth, with Christ, and is animated by the Spirit of Truth: "*I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matt 28:20). "*His Body … is the Church*" (Col 1:24), says the apostle.

You who are full of iniquities must thirst to suffer every iniquity from other people, so that "*the judgment of God*" (Rom 2:3) may be manifested in you in this present life. "*With the measure you use*" to your Lord and your neighbor, "*it will be measured back to you*" (Matt 7:2). Bear always in mind the example of the great Righteous One, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who, though He was righteous, still suffered every iniquity from men, and was lifted up on the Cross and died a most shameful death.

Do not be faint-hearted and do not despair when men hate you for revealing their sins, but rejoice the more, remembering the words of the Saviour, "*Blessed are you when men hate you*" (Luke 6:22).

A man builds himself a house and lives in it; an animal prepares a lair and lives in it; the bird prepares a nest and hatches its young ones in it; the bee builds a hive with honeycomb and lives in it, preparing honey for itself; the spider weaves a web and lives in it, trapping food for itself. Was it not, therefore, fitting that the Creator should build Himself a house not made with hands—His Body—in the womb of the Virgin Mother? Even now, He creates temples for His Body in the life-giving Mysteries. For He is the Creator, Who has built and continues to build houses for all sentient and spiritual creatures.

* * *

The priesthood, and holy men in general, are sacred reservoirs, from which grace-filled water is communicated to other believers. "*Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water*" (John 7:38).

How pure and spiritual should be the mouths of priests, who so often pronounce the Most-holy name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit! How still more spiritual and pure should be their hearts to contain and feel in themselves the sweetness of this most precious, glorious, and justly worshipped name! O, how far a priest should withdraw himself from carnal delights, in order not to become flesh, in which the Spirit of God cannot dwell!

* * *

What carnal delights can there be for a priest, when he must find delight in the Lord alone, so that He may grant him the petitions of his heart? What carnal delights can there be for a priest, when so many of his spiritual children disclose to him their various spiritual or bodily infirmities, with which he must whole-heartedly sympathize, concerning which he must give sincere and wholesome advice? What carnal delights can there be, when he must every day wrestle in prayer for them with his whole heart and with tears before the Lord—lest the mental wolf fall upon them and ravish them—that God may grant them a prosperous life, faith, and spiritual wisdom? What carnal delights can there be for a priest when he must often perform services in the church and stand before the altar of the Lord, when he must often celebrate the divine and most wonderful liturgy, when he must be the celebrant and partaker of the heavenly, immortal, and Life-giving Mysteries? The heart that loves carnal delights is unfaithful to the Lord. "*You cannot serve God and mammon*" (Matt 6:24).

"*You will know them by their fruits*" (Matt 7:16). By the most-sweet, most-blessed, and life-giving fruits of the liturgy—the most-pure Mysteries of the Body and Blood of the Lord—you will recognize that the liturgy is from God, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that this Most-holy, Life-giving Spirit breathes in all its prayers and sacred rites. What a wonderful living tree is this Divine Liturgy! What leaves it has! What fruits it bears! Not only the fruits, but even "*the leaves of the tree were for the healing of*

the nations" (Rev 22:2). For who has not received great spiritual benefit, peace, and blessedness in his soul merely from standing piously at the Divine Liturgy! That which brings forth good fruits must be in itself good; this is the law of creation.

One of the most powerful wiles of the devil is to weaken the heart through laziness, and with it all the spiritual and bodily powers. At such times, faith, hope, and love are dried up in the heart; we become faithless, despondent, insensible toward God and man. The salt has lost its savor.

* * *

In order to obtain everything you wish, you must merely feel the genuine need of that for which you pray; believe that every good and perfect gift comes from God and not from men (or by chance, or through circumstances, or fate); know that God sees and hears all your needs, every movement of your heart and of your thoughts; acknowledge that He is all good, almighty, most wise, able to accomplish anything in an instant by a single movement of His thought, through the Son in His Holy Spirit. For although many things are impossible with men, it is not so with God, "*for with God all things are possible*" (Mark 10:27).

Hope in prayer consists of speaking the petitions, thanksgiving, and praise with faith in the presence of God and His readiness to listen. Hopeful prayer has the fear of God, with no doubt, or even the least bit of worry that He will not accept and fulfill our petition. Hopeful prayer instead has absolute assurance that God has heard us and accepted our petitions on His heavenly and noetic altar, together with the petitions of our mother the Church (if we pray in the name of the Church), as well as the request of our own heart, He will give us, as the all good, almighty, and most wise, all that we ask, and more abundantly than we ask or expect. But the heart that is partial and greedy for food and drink, and is weakened by them, does not have such a hope. Neither does the heart in which hatred and animosity are concealed, nor the heart that is bound with avarice, covetousness, and envy, not until it puts away its infirmities and amends itself.

* * *

When we make the sign of the cross, we touch with three fingers the upper end of the cross on the forehead as an image of God the Father, Who

is the uncreated reason. The lower end of the cross we place on the belly as an image of the Son, Who was begotten before all ages from the womb of the Father. The first part of the crossbar we place on the shoulders as an image of the Holy Spirit, the arm or the power of God, or the hand of the Lord, as has been said, "*to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed*" (John 12:38; Isa 53:1). "*The hand of the Lord was upon me there*" (Ezek 3:22), meaning the Holy Spirit. There is another image of the Holy Trinity in man himself. The mind is the image of God the Father; the heart, in which wisdom dwells and expresses itself, is the image of God the Son, the Hypostatic Wisdom of God; the mouth, through which all that is in the thoughts and in the heart proceeds, is the image of the Holy Spirit: "*He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' …*" (John 20:22). When "*out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications … blasphemies*" (Matt 15:19), then it is the evil spirit nesting in man's heart that comes forth, but when "*a good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good*" (Luke 6:45.), this is the image of the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father through the Son. How great, therefore, is man! It has not been said in vain: "*I said, Ye are gods, and ye are all children of the Most High*" (Psalm 81:6). "*If He called them gods, to whom the Word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken) [that is, if it has been said, then it must be true, immutable], do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"* (John 10:35, 36). O, what dignity! O, what greatness of man! Do not regard any man, especially a Christian, as anything other than the son of God, and receive him as the son of God, converse with him, behave with him as with the son of God, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A certain person was fatally ill from inflammation in his bowels for nine days, and obtained no relief from medical aid; but as soon as he had communed of the Holy Mysteries on the morning of the ninth day, he completely regained his health and rose from his bed of sickness in the evening of the same day. He received Holy Communion with firm faith. I prayed to the Lord to cure him. "Lord," said I, "heal Your servant of his sickness. He is worthy, therefore grant him this. He loves Your priests and is generous to them." I also prayed for him in church before the altar of the Lord at the Liturgy, especially during the prayer: "O Thou Who hast bestowed upon us these common and concordant prayers, and Who hast

promised that when two or three are agreed in Thy name Thou wouldst grant their requests,”[30] and before the Most-holy Mysteries themselves. I prayed in the following words: “O Lord, our life! It is as easy for You to cure a sickness as it is for me to think of healing. It is as easy for You to raise every man from the dead as it is for me to think of the possibility of the resurrection from the dead. Cure, then, Your servant Basil of his cruel sickness, and do not let him die. Do not let his wife and children be given up to weeping.” And the Lord graciously heard and had mercy on him, although he was within a hair’s breadth of death. Glory to Your omnipotence and mercy, that You, Lord, have vouchsafed to hear me!

* * *

The heart can change several times in a moment—from good to evil, from faith to unbelief, from simplicity to cunning, from love to hatred, from benevolence to envy, from generosity to avarice, from chastity to fornication. O, what inconstancy! O, how many dangers! O, how vigilant and watchful we must be!

* * *

Do not rejoice when your countenance is bright from pleasant food and drink, because then the inner face of your soul is hideous and death-like. At that time, the words of the Saviour Christ are applicable to you, “*For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones*” (Matt 23:27, 28), that is, full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

How many times, O Master, Lord Jesus, have You renewed my nature, heedlessly corrupted by sins! There is no possible way to quantify it! How many times have You saved me from the furnace burning within me, the furnace of many and diverse passions, the abyss of despondency and despair! How many times have You renewed my depraved heart, when I have only called upon Your Name with faith! How many times have You accomplished this through the Life-giving Holy Mysteries! O Lord! Truly there is no limit or measure to Your mercies to me, a sinner. What shall I offer You, or what can I give You for Your countless benefits to me, O Jesus, my life and my freedom? May I be prudent in my ways, according to Your grace, for “*blessed are the blameless in the way*” (Psalm 118:1), as

You have said through the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our forefather, David. I will endeavor to be faithful to You, to be humble, meek, not irritable, gentle, forbearing, industrious, merciful, generous, not covetous, obedient.

Almsgiving is good and salvific when it is done together with amendment of the heart from pride, malice, envy, slothfulness, indolence, gluttony, fornication, falsehood, deceitfulness, and other sins. But if a person is not careful to change his heart, trusting only to his alms, then he will obtain little benefit from them, for he builds with one hand and destroys with the other.

* * *

The children Paul and Olga, by the infinite mercy of the Lord, according to my unworthy prayer, have been cured of the spirit of infirmity that held them captive. In the case of the child Paul, his disease was cured through sleep, while the child Olga became quiet in spirit, and her little face grew bright instead of dark and troubled. Nine times I went to pray with bold trust, hoping my trust might not be shamed, hoping that to him who knocketh it would be opened, that even because of my insistence alone God would fulfill my requests, that if the unjust judge at last satisfied the woman who troubled him, then still more the Judge of all, the most righteous Judge, would satisfy my sinful prayer for the innocent children, that He would consider my labor, my intercession, my prayerful words, my kneeling, my boldness, my trust in Him. And the Lord did so. He did not cover me, a sinner, with shame. I came for the tenth time to their home, and the children were well. I gave thanks to the Lord and to our most speedy helper, the Theotokos.

* * *

"*That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us*" (John 17:21). What separates us from God and each other? Money, food, and drink—this dust, this corruption, this rot. Why? Because we do not have living, Christian hope and faith in God. We do not know, or we forget, that man's true life is love for God and his neighbor. Setting our life on dust and trusting in it, we do not render to the Heavenly Father the glory that is due to Him by trusting Him completely

and by laying all our cares on Him, as Christ's faithful children should do. "*If then I am the Father, Where is My honor?"* (Ma 1:6). Where is your trust in Me? Where is your love for Me? Where is your detachment from the earthly and corrupt and your heartfelt desire for the heavenly, spiritual, and eternal?

While I live, then the flesh is mine own, because my spirit lives in it; but when I die, the flesh is no longer mine, but belongs to God and to the earth: "*The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof*" (Psalm 23:1). "*For dust you are, And to dust you shall return*" (Gen 3:19). "*Whosoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood*" (John 6:54)—these words also signify that God Himself completely abides in these two forms of the Communion—in the flesh and blood. They are His by their close association with Him, as the flesh and blood of a person is united with the soul, for the soul penetrates the body and the blood.

How many times has death entered into my heart, infiltrating my body? (A countless number of times!) And yet the Lord delivered me from this state of death and was merciful to me with unutterable mercy, giving me new life. O, how full of gratitude to the Lord my heart should be! "*If the Lord had not helped me, my soul had almost dwelt in hell*" (Psalm 93:17).

* * *

Our body becomes depressed and downcast when it is subject to infirmities; while when it is in good health and enjoys carnal pleasures, it rejoices, leaps, and jumps out of its own skin, so to speak. We must pay no attention to the delusive feelings of the flesh, and, in general, we must disdain every carnal diversion and delight. We must bear with equanimity the afflictions and maladies of the flesh and take courage and set our hope on God.

* * *

Why is impatience in some small, unimportant matter, or even a single movement of the heart toward impatience, already a sin, immediately punished within us? Likewise, why is every momentary movement of the heart toward sin considered a sin and immediately punished? Because impatience in a small matter is a kind of deposit for future, greater impatience, for the soul of man is simple, and a single inclination of the

heart toward sin is already a sin. Therefore, since every small, unimportant sin leads to greater ones, the small sin is always punished at its very beginning and must be crushed. "*You were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord*" (Matt 25:21). And how great are these many things? "*Eye has not seen, Nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him*" (1 Cor 2:9).

When praying, try any way you can to feel in your heart the truth and the power of the words of the prayer. Fill yourself with them as with imperishable food. Water your heart with them as with dew and warm yourself with them, as though they were a grace-filled fire.

* * *

The Lord is everything to me. He is the strength of my heart and the light of my mind. He inclines my heart to everything good; He strengthens it; He gives me good thoughts; He is my rest and my joy; He is my faith, hope, and love; He is my food and drink, my clothing, my dwelling place. As a mother is everything to her child—his mind, will, sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, even his food, drink, clothing, hands, and feet, so the Lord is everything to me when I submit myself wholly to Him. But, alas! When I fall away from the Lord, then the devil enters into me, and if I did not turn my heart's gaze toward the Lord, or call on the Lord to help me during the enemy's attack, then the devil would have been, as he sometimes is, the very incarnation of evil in me. He becomes my malice, despondency, feebleness toward everything good, despair, hatred, envy, avarice, blasphemy, wicked and impure thoughts, contempt for everything. In short, he would have been, and sometimes is, my very mind, my will, sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch, my very hands and feet. Therefore, put your trust in the Lord. He is "He Who Is," infinite in holiness, omnipotence, grace, mercy, generosity, and wisdom.

* * *

When your body is afflicted by diseases, remember that it is the greatest enemy of your salvation that suffers, that is weakened by these sufferings, and so bear them bravely in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Who for our sake endured the Cross and suffered death. Also, remember that all our

diseases are God's punishment for sins. They cleanse us, they reconcile us with God, and they lead us back to His love. Grant us "Thy peace and Thy love, as Thou hast granted us all things." Remember that during your illness, the Lord Himself is with you ("*I am with him in trouble*" [Psalm 90:15]). The disease came about at the will of the Master, Who chastises us as a father. Though you remain faithful in the time of your health, be careful not to fall away from God in the time of misfortune. Instead, like the martyrs, be constant in faith, hope, and love.

God is a simple, perfect Being, the purest holiness, the purest good and truth. In order to achieve union with God, in order to be one spirit with Him (for we are from Him), we must acquire, through His grace, the most perfect simplicity of goodness, holiness, and love. All the saints who are in heaven were cleansed by the blood of the Son of God, through the Holy Spirit, and have not a shadow of sin in them. It was for this reason that they struggled in this life and mortified their flesh, in order to cleanse themselves "*from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*" (2 Cor 7:1), in order to become eternally united with that most glorious Being. It is for this reason also that the Holy Church with all her institutions—the hierarchy, the divine services, the sacraments, the rites—now exists upon earth. Fasts were likewise appointed in order to cleanse and sanctify the children of God, in order to unite them with that most-blessed Being, glorified in the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

You ask the Lord to love Him with a love as strong as death, or until death. Suppose, now, that the Lord sends you a terrible disease that may bring you to death's very door. Do not, then, complain against the Lord, but bear it bravely, thanking the Lord for His fatherly visitation, and this will show that what you call your love for God is truly as strong as death. And during the most violent fits or spasms of your illness, trust in God, remembering that He has the power to save you not only from suffering, but even from death itself, should it please Him to do so. Do not spare, do not pamper your perishable body, but give it up willingly and completely to the Lord, as Abraham gave his son Isaac as a burnt offering. Give yourself up to the will of the Lord Who chastises you, not losing faith in God's goodness, not growing despondent, not foolishly accusing God of injustice for so severely chastising you, and you will offer a great sacrifice unto God, like Abraham or the martyrs.

* * *

Let everything that calms my thoughts and heart be written down as a memory to me of the constant peace of my heart amid the cares and vanities of life. What is it? It is the Christian saying, full of living hope and miraculous consolation: “The Lord is everything to me.” This is the priceless treasure! This is the precious jewel that consoles in every condition. With it, you can be prosperous even in poverty and generous and kind-hearted to all in prosperity. It gives us hope, even after sin. “The Lord is everything to me.” He is my faith, my trust, my love, my strength, my power, my peace, my joy, my riches, my food, my drink, my clothing, my life. In a word, He is everything to me. O man, the Lord is everything to you! You must be everything to the Lord. Since all your treasure is contained in your heart and in your will, God desires your heart, having said: “*My son, give Me your heart*” (Prov 23:26). Therefore, in order to fulfill God’s gracious and perfect will, renounce your own corrupt, passionate, deluded will. Seek not to do your own will, but only God’s will. “Not my will, but Thy will be done.”

There is absolutely no reason for a Christian to be proud of accomplishing good works, for he is being constantly saved from every evil only by his faith, in the same way as he does good works also by the same faith. “*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast*” (Eph 2:8–9). This is said so that no one should be proud of anything.

As long as we stand in fervent prayer, our soul is filled with calm, warmth, freedom, and light, because we are with God and in God. If we abandon prayer, we are immediately attacked by confusion and temptations. O, most blessed time of prayer!

* * *

Love for God begins to manifest itself and act in us when we begin to love our neighbor as ourselves, and when we do not spare either ourselves or any of our possessions for his sake, since he is the image of God. Divine Love begins to act in us when we endeavor to serve our neighbor for his salvation in every way we can and when, for the sake of pleasing God, we refuse to gratify our appetites, the lust of our eyes, and our carnal mind-set,

which is not submissive to the wisdom of God. "*If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen ?"* (1 John 4:20). "*Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*" (Gal 5:24).

Ask the Lord for whatever you desire. God the Father has but to will it, and the Son, the Creator, and the Holy Spirit, the Accomplisher, being always with Him and in Him, as He Himself is in Them, will accomplish the desire of the Almighty and All-good Father, for They Themselves are one with Him in goodness and omnipotence.

* * *

You should not keep God's gifts to yourself, but you should distribute them to others. Nature herself is an example to you—the sun does not keep its light to itself, but diffuses it upon the earth and moon. Priests especially should not keep their (or rather, God's) light to themselves, but should abundantly diffuse the light of their intelligence and knowledge upon others.

* * *

With what are our hearts occupied? God, "*who trieth the very hearts and reins*" (Psalm 7:10), sees what each one of us has in his heart, to what it is attached during the greater part of life, and if the Lord had given us the capability of seeing all the depths of our heart, then our eyes would have turned away with horror from the mass of impurities within—adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, pride, etc. What abominations would we have beheld! The abominations of ingratitude to God, forgetfulness of God, unbelief, weak faith, countless attachments to earthly things (often the most absurd things!), carelessness for heavenly matters, lack of worry for our own lot after death, inattention and neglect of the Church, her services, rites, and institutions, contempt of the clergy, the representatives of religion and the Church, and every other abomination!

* * *

It is impossible to imagine and think of the cross without thinking of love. Where the cross is, there is love. In the Church, you see crosses everywhere and on everything, in order that everything should remind you that you are in the church of the God of love, in the church of Love Himself, crucified for us.

* * *

People say that if you feel no inclination to pray, it is better not to pray, but this is the cunning of a carnal mind-set. If you only pray when you feel the inclination, you will completely cease praying—this is what the flesh desires. "*The kingdom of heaven suffers violence*" (Matt 11:12). You will not be able to work out your salvation without forcing yourself to be virtuous.

* * *

When educating the young, it is extremely dangerous to develop only the mind and reason and not pay attention to the heart. We must, above all, pay attention to the heart, for the heart is life, but life corrupted by sin. It is necessary to purify this source of life, to kindle in it the pure flame of life, so that it would burn and never be extinguished, so that it would direct all thoughts, desires, and tendencies during the entire course of life. Society is corrupted precisely through want of Christian education. It is time that Christians should understand the Lord, should understand what He requires of us—namely, a pure heart. "*Blessed are the pure in heart*" (Matt 5:8). Listen to His sweetest voice in the Gospel. The true life of our heart is Christ ("*Christ lives in me*" [Gal 2:20]). Let all of you learn wisdom from the Apostle. This should be our common work—to place Christ firmly in our hearts through faith.

* * *

These hands that like to accept gifts shall be folded across the breast and shall take no more. These feet that like to walk on evil paths, not stand in prayer, shall be stretched out forever and shall not walk anywhere any more. These eyes that look enviously at the prosperity of their neighbor shall close, their fire shall be dimmed forever, and nothing shall give them

pleasure again. These ears, so often willing to listen with pleasure to evil words and calumny, shall be deadened, and not even thunder will be audible to them. They shall only hear the trumpet announcing the raising of the dead, when our incorruptible body shall rise, for "those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (John 5:29). What, then, will continue to live in us, even after our death, and what should be the object of all our worries during our present life? That which we now call the heart, that is, the inward man, our soul. This should be the object of our care. Cleanse your heart during your entire life, so that it, or your soul, may be capable of seeing God afterward. Only care for your body and its needs as much as is necessary for maintaining its health, strength, and decency. It will all die, and the earth will bear it all away. Strive, therefore, to perfect within you that which loves and hates, that which is calm or uneasy, that which rejoices or grieves—that is, your heart or your inward man (that which thinks and reasons through your mind).

* * *

Throughout their earthly life, people seek everything but Christ, the Life-giver. This is why they have no spiritual life, this is why they are subject to every passion—unbelief, lack of faith, covetousness, envy, hatred, ambition, finding pleasure in eating and drinking. Only at the end of their life do they seek Christ in the Holy Communion, and this only out of crying necessity or because it is a generally accepted custom. O Christ, our God, our Life and Resurrection! How low have we fallen in our vanity, how blind have we become! But how would it have been if we had always sought You, always had You in our hearts? The tongue cannot express the bliss that those who have You in their hearts experience! To them You are strong food, inexhaustible drink, shining clothing, the sun, "*the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding*" (Phil 4:7), unutterable joy, everything. When we are with You, all earthly things become dust and corruption.

* * *

"*It is the Spirit who gives life*" (John 6:63). The source of life in all creatures is the Spirit of the Lord, Who gave them life the time of their creation, while the Son of God created them, bringing them from

nonexistence into being. This is also how the Body and the Blood of Christ are changed by the Holy Spirit from the bread and wine, in the same way as a body was created by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Most-pure Virgin from Her blood. The Holy Spirit creates us in the womb of our mother. It is to the Spirit of God that we owe all our spiritual blessings.

* * *

The kingdom of life and the kingdom of death go side by side. The ruler of the first kingdom, the kingdom of life, is Jesus Christ, and those who are with Christ are undoubtedly in the kingdom of life. The ruler of the second kingdom, the kingdom of death, is the prince of the powers of the air, the devil, with the spirits of evil subject to him, of which there are so many that their number far exceeds the number of all men dwelling upon earth. These children of death, the subjects of the prince of the air, are in constant, persistent warfare with the children of life, with faithful Christians, and they strive by every crafty means to win them over to their side, through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, because sin and iniquity are their element, and through sins, if we do not repent of them, we pass over to their side, while those who have a daily need to sin, who drink iniquity like water, are not disturbed by the spirits of evil, because they already belong to them, as long as they live without a care for their souls. But as soon as they turn to God, acknowledging their sins, both voluntary and involuntary, warfare erupts, and the hordes of Satan rise up and wage an unceasing fight. You see by this how necessary it is to seek Christ, the ruler of the kingdom of life, the conqueror of hell and death.

* * *

Every sorrow and oppression arises either from lack of faith or from some passion concealing itself within the person, or from some other impurity visible to the Almighty. They reveal to us that the devil is in our heart, and that Christ is not in our heart. Christ is the peace, the freedom, and the ineffable light of the soul.

* * *

The air, the wind, the breathing of creatures in the material world correspond to the spirits in the spiritual world and to the uncreated, life-giving Spirit of God. This is why the Spirit manifested itself as "*a rushing mighty wind*" (Acts 2:2), and this is also why the Saviour compares the breathing of the Spirit in the souls of "*everyone who is born of the Spirit*" (John 3:8) to the blowing of wind. In the material world, there are many things that correspond to spiritual realities, because the material world is also the creation of the Spirit. Can the creating Spirit not at least partly reveal His image and likeness in the creatures created by Him? Man is only the highest possible image of God among material creatures.

* * *

Kissing with the lips corresponds to kissing with the soul. When we kiss holy things, we should kiss them with the soul and heart as well as the lips.

* * *

The Lord rules wonderfully and mightily over material worlds through His wisdom and His word. As all the parts of the body of an animal, of a tree, of grass, of stone are held together by cohesion, so all the worlds are held together by the powers and laws given to them. As the soul bears the body and gives life to it, so God carries the world, giving life to it through His Holy Spirit. It is not without reason that a man is called a microcosm.

* * *

What an insignificant cobweb the world must be to God! What an insignificant cobweb is my body! And yet there is wisdom in every point of matter, and everything is held together only by wisdom, by the eternal laws of wisdom. O, wisdom, wisdom! We all owe our being to You, to Your good source. My death, my decomposition or destruction, clearly proves what an insignificant cobweb I am.

* * *

Glory to You, Life-giving Father, Life-giving Son, and Life-giving Holy Spirit, simple Being, God. Always, You save us from the spiritual death of

our soul caused by passions. Glory to You, Tri-hypostatic Lord Who enlighten the dark face of our soul and body, and bestow on us Your peace, which exceeds every earthly and physical good and surpasses all understanding.

* * *

Pray without ceasing, calling upon the name of the life-giving Trinity, lest your soul be suddenly overwhelmed by any passion—pride, envy, malice, hatred, avarice, covetousness, gluttony, anger, irritability, harsh judgment, scorn, falsehood, slander, or any such passion, for we walk among snares every hour, every minute of our life. Let the eyes of your heart be vigilant every hour, every minute. Let your heart be watchful, not only during the day, but also during the night, according to the Scriptures: "*I sleep, but my heart is awake*" (Song 5:2).

* * *

We must love our neighbor even more when he sins against God or against ourselves, because then he is sick, because then he is in spiritual misfortune and danger, then, especially, we must have compassion upon him, pray for him, and apply to his heart a protective bandage—a word of kindness, instruction, reproval, consolation, forgiveness, love. "*Forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you*" (Eph 4:32). All sins and passions, quarrels and disputes, are truly spiritual diseases—that is how we must look upon them. All passions are a fire of the soul, a great, raging internal fire, a fire coming from the abyss of hell. It must be extinguished by the water of love, which is strong enough to extinguish every diabolical flame of malice and other passions. But woe and misfortune to us, to our self-love, if we increase this flame with a fresh diabolical fire, with our own malice and irritability, and thus make ourselves helpers of the spirits of evil, who always endeavor to inflame the souls of men with various passions. If we do so, we ourselves shall deserve the fire of Gehenna, and if we do not repent and do not become in future wise in virtue and gentle with respect to evil, then we shall be condemned, together with the devil and his angels, to torments in the lake of fire. Therefore, let us not be overcome by evil, but let us overcome evil with good. How accursed are we men! How is it that we have not yet learned to consider every sin as a great misfortune for our

soul, and not to pity, from the bottom of our heart, sincerely, lovingly, all those who fall into the misfortune of sin? Why do we not flee from sin as from poison, as from a serpent? Why do we linger in sin? Why do we have no pity on ourselves as well, when we are subjected to any sin? Why do we not weep before the Lord Who created us?

* * *

The Lord allows us to be attacked by various passions in this life so that we may hate these passions with all our heart, so that we may look at everything earthly as nothing, however precious and pleasant it may appear, and so that we may long with all our hearts for God alone, the source of peace and life, cling to Him alone, value Him, His holy will, His peace and joy before all else.

* * *

You feel constrained from all sides. Everything betrays you—your relations, friends, acquaintances, riches, the pleasures of the senses, your own body, all the elements of earth, water, fire, air, and light play you false. Cling, therefore, to God alone, "*with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning*" (James 1:17). God alone is love.

* * *

It is remarkable that some irritable people, after experiencing the agony and torment of violent and prolonged anger, become gentle, meek, and peaceable. The same is true of the other passions. The Lord Himself has pointed out that their punishment lies in themselves, in their extreme agony. Pride, envy, hatred, avarice, and covetousness—all are thus punished. Each passion is its own tormentor and, at the same time, the executioner of each man possessed with it.

* * *

"*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord*" (Heb 12:14). Do not break peace for the sake of anything perishable and transitory, for the sake of your sinful self-love. Love peace

above everything, as the Lord Himself. Let nothing be closer to your heart than peace and mutual love. Let us love peace, peace, peace!

* * *

The human soul is free, for it can become either a power for good or evil, according to the direction that you yourself give it. Lord, Almighty Power! Strengthen my infirm soul in every virtue! Establish my heart, weak in all virtue, on the immovable rock of Your commandments! Lord, I daily recognize through experience that without You I myself am nothing and that without You I can do no good. Without You, evil in its various forms is the only force alive in me. Without You, I am the son of perdition. O unspeakably Good One, fill my heart with Your goodness! But above all, I pray You, grant that I may love You with all my heart and my neighbor as myself. Grant that I may not be malicious, proud, presumptuous, or disobedient, but grant that I may be instead gentle, humble, gently respectful, and obedient. Amen.

* * *

O, how carefully do the devil and the world sow their tares in Christ's field, the Church of God. Instead of the Word of God, they sow the word of the world, the word of vanity. Instead of the temple of God, the world has invented its own temples, temples to its own vanity—theaters, circuses, social gatherings. Instead of holy icons, which worldly people do not accept, in the world there are painted portraits, photographs, illustrations, and various other pictures. Instead of God and the saints, the world honors, even adores, its own celebrities—writers, actors, singers, painters, all those who have the confidence and trust of society, verging on veneration. Poor Christians! They have completely fallen away from Christ! Instead of spiritual clothing, they give all their attention to perishable clothing—fashionable dresses and all kinds of exquisite ornaments, both splendid and costly.

* * *

In sickness and in general during bodily infirmity, as well as in affliction, a person cannot at first burn with faith and love for God, because in

affliction and sickness the heart aches, while faith and love require a healthy heart, a calm heart. This is why we must not grieve too much if we, during sickness and affliction, cannot believe in God, love Him, and pray to Him as fervently as we should. Everything has its proper time. There is an unfavorable time even for prayer.

* * *

Address your neighbor with a perfect heart, that is, truthfully and with the same love as you would have for your own self, so that your neighbor will love you in return. Even if he does not love you, he will at least respect your virtue, honoring it, emulating it.

* * *

Will a beggar, fed on crumbs from the master's table, be proud that he eats such crumbs? What is there for him to be proud of? His poverty? I am this beggar, the master is the Lord, and the crumbs from His table are all His gifts—natural and given by Grace.

* * *

What is a good indication that a Christian is near to Christ? The Christian who is near to Christ often turns with faith and love to Christ. He often pronounces His sweetest name and often calls on Him for help. He often turns his eyes, thoughts, and heart toward Him. Christ the Lord naturally reveals Himself on his tongue and in his eyes, because without Christ he is powerless, joyless. On the other hand, the man who is far from Christ seldom, very seldom, turns his thoughts toward Christ, and even then without heartfelt faith and love, but only due to some necessity, as to a person who is little known to him, who does not give him joy, who does not delight his heart, and who has no attraction for him. This is why we see that those who are near to Christ do not let Christ out of their thoughts and heart. They live in Him—He is their breath, food, drink, home, everything. Through the sweetness of His name and His grace-filled touch they cleave to Him with their whole being: "*My soul hath hanged upon Thee*" (Psalm 62:9). And in this union they find unspeakable bliss, which the world cannot know. This is how to differentiate the one who has found Christ

from the one who has not yet found Him. Those who have not found Christ live in this life without heartfelt faith; they think and care more about worldly things—how to enjoy themselves, how to eat and drink pleasurably, how to dress exquisitely, how to satisfy their carnal desires, how to kill time, because they do not know what to do with it, even though time seeks them and, not finding them, quickly flies away before their eyes. Day after day speeds ahead, night after night, month after month, year after year, until, finally, the last terrible hour strikes, and they hear a voice, "Stop, the course is finished; your time has been lost; your sins and iniquities have preceded you; they will fall upon you with all their power, and will crush you with their weight eternally."

* * *

What does it mean to seek diversion? It means to wish to somehow fill the sickly inner emptiness of the soul, which was created for activity, and which cannot bear to be idle.

* * *

Let all that you know concerning religion and faith be always new to you, that is, having the same importance, holiness, and interest.

* * *

Our God is the perfect Lord and Master of all creatures, and we know that His commands and His will are obeyed by all creatures—by the angels and men who have wise hearts, by heaven, earth, and all that is in them, even by hell and all that is therein. He commands the angels, and they hasten to fulfill His will. He commands them to be guardians of newborn children, and they guard them during their entire life, not disregarding His commands in anything. He commands the heavens, and they either give forth rain, dew, snow, and hail, or they hold them back. He commands the winds, the waters, and they obey Him; He commands the fire, and it obeys Him; He commands the sun, and it is obscured or shines upon everything under it, warming and lighting it. He commands the earth, and it gives rise to various kinds of plants. He commands it to cease growing, and the growth ceases. He commanded the waters to flow without restraint over the

earth, and they did so, as in the time of the universal flood. He commands the winds, and they blow and rage furiously, sometimes becoming destructive as a punishment for our sins. He commanded the whale to devour the prophet Jonah, and it was ready to seize him. He commanded the fish to fill His disciples' nets, and the fish rushed into the nets, rushed to obey the Creator's commands. He commands the dead to rise and live again, and death flees from man and life again appears in him. He commands the disease to leave a sick man, and the disease departs, and the sick man rises up healthy and sound. He commands the demons, and they obey without argument. Great is the name of the Lord, praised be the name of the Lord, most glorious is the name of the Lord! He can change at His pleasure all objects created by Him; for instance, He changes water into blood, water into wine, a rod into a living serpent, a rod into a living tree, a woman into a pillar, as was the case with Lot's wife, a serpent into gold, gold into a serpent, as the Lord did at the prayers of St Spiridon of Tremithus.[31] But the Lord's power and sovereignty are especially manifest when He converts a sinful man into a holy chosen vessel after he had terribly fallen, when He restores, raises, and renews the depraved, when He gives life to the man who was dead in soul and body, and when He leads into eternal life him who had fallen into eternal death. This is indeed the miracle of miracles! This reveals the infinite mercy, wisdom, and omnipotence of the Lord to His creatures. Above all, it shows that He Himself, the infinite and uncontainable Lord of all creation, willed and was able to become man for our salvation. "*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*" (John 1:14), living with men and being like man in everything, except sin. "*The heavens were in awe, and the ends of the earth were astonished, that God appeared as man in the flesh.*"[32] He conversed with men, helped us, worked innumerable miracles, suffered (O, wonder!), died (O, awful wonder!), and rose again, raising us with Himself also, who were all dead in Adam! I glorify Your Most-merciful, Holy, Almighty, and wise power, O Lord! Show in me, also, O Lord, Your miraculous power, and save me, Your unworthy servant, in whatever ways You will, disregarding my transgressions, voluntary and involuntary, committed in knowledge or ignorance, guiding me ever in Your way, and strengthening me on this way by Your grace, and through me all those whom Thou hast placed under me as a light, shepherd, teacher, and priest.

* * *

When you partake of the immortal food and drink, the Body and Blood of the Lord, raise your grateful heart to the Lord and say, I thank You, O Lord, Bread of Life and source of immortality, for giving to us Your Body and Blood for our food and drink, so that we, cleansed and sanctified here by them, may enter into Your eternal kingdom and may eternally delight in the contemplation of Your countenance and Your blessed life! Do not allow me, Lord, to care only for bodily food and drink, do not allow me, Lord, to become attached to them, but grant that I may cleave to You alone. When you partake of perishable sweet food, thank the Lord, saying, I thank You, eternal and incomparable sweetness, infinitely surpassing all earthly, coarse, perishable sweetness. You are the imperishable, life-giving, holy, tranquil, light, most peaceful, most joyful, inexhaustible sweetness. I thank You also for granting me these perishable sweet things to partake of and enjoy, so that through them I may learn, although only in part, how sweet You are, for You are all sweetness, all desire. When you are lit by the light of the sun, say Glory to You, O sweetest light that never sets and gives joy to all things, for this perishable but beautiful light, for lighting us with this image of Your inaccessible divine light, so that from this material light our thoughts may unceasingly rise up to You, the eternal Light that never sets, and may aspire to attain through purity of life Your most blessed contemplation. When you breathe the air with your lungs, that vivifying and refreshing element, constantly necessary for the support of our perishable life, again raise your thoughts to the life-giving Lord, the Holy Spirit, with the Father and the Son, by Whom we live, move, and exist, thanking Him for uninterrupted breath. Know also that as the body cannot live without air, so your soul cannot for an instant lead the true life without the Holy Spirit, and by a pure and temperate life strive constantly to be in communion with God Himself, for without Him, the soul dies. Thus, from every created thing or being, raise your thoughts continually to the Creator. Thank Him for everything, and do not cling to any creature, do not serve any creature more than the Creator Himself, for service or slavery to creatures and attachment to earthly things is idolatry.

* * *

Bring your heart as a sacrifice to God, give it entirely to the Almighty, renounce yourself and all your sinful inclinations—malice, hatred, pride, disobedience, self-will, envy, ill-will, pleasure in others' misfortunes, avarice, covetousness, gluttony, carnal filthiness, stealing, deceit, laziness, and others. Instead, continually force yourself to be kind when others exasperate and offend you. Force yourself to pray for your enemies. Pray for meekness, humility, gentleness, sincere goodwill, generosity, nonacquisitiveness, abstinence, chastity, almsgiving, truth, righteousness, industry, obedience, and others. It is difficult to conquer the passions, which become like natural parts of our own body ("*Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth*" [Col 3:5]), but by being continually watchful over yourself, through constant, fervent prayer and abstinence, with the help of God you will be able to conquer and eradicate them.

* * *

"*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them*" (Matt 18:20). I give honor even to two or three praying together, for, according to the Lord's promise, He Himself is in the midst of them. I give even more honor to a large gathering. Communal prayer is quickly answered and bears much fruit when it is united and unanimous ("*gathered together in My name*" [Matt 18:20]). The zealous prayer of the Church for the Apostle Peter immediately rose up to the throne of the Lord, and the Lord sent his angel to miraculously deliver Peter from the prison and from Herod, who wanted to execute him. The united prayer of the Apostles Paul and Silas brought down upon them miraculous heavenly help from the Holy Spirit (Acts 12:5–11; 16:24–26).

* * *

What darkness, what madness, what sickness, what a terrible, deadly power is sin! Gazing at faces because they are beautiful, we inwardly commit adultery. We hate a man because his character does not agree with ours, because he has different passions to ours, because he doesn't have the same disposition as ours, which is often not sinless, but passionate and vicious as well. Is the beauty of a face a reason to commit adultery? Should it not rather be a reason for praising the Creator, Who created man so beautifully? Is the fact of a man's character or temper not agreeing with

ours, his not showing much indulgence to our pride and in general to our passions, his not having the same disposition as ours, a reason for us to hate him? Has not everybody his own free will, his own character, temperament, habits, passions, and ways? Should we not be indulgent to everyone, should we not respect everyone's personal freedom, which even the Lord Himself does not violate?

* * *

It is unpleasant for a proud man when he is required to be humble before others. It is unpleasant for an envious man when he is required to wish his enemies well. It is uncomfortable for a vindictive man when forgiveness and reconciliation are required of him. It is uncomfortable for one who loves money to be reminded of paying his debts. It is uncomfortable for a glutton when he is reminded of fasting and of the salvation of his soul. But they should all conquer their feelings, their passions, and joyfully fulfill that which is required of them, by the Gospel. Otherwise, by giving themselves up without remorse, irremediably to their passions, they will be eternally lost.

* * *

Glory to the power of Your grace, O Lord! Nothing, no attack of sin, can resist it in those who call upon it with faith. Thus, when subjected to the violence of the enemy of everything good—the devil—and tempted by passions, I make the sign of the cross, saying inwardly, "Nothing can resist the power of Your grace," and the violence ceases, the trouble and oppression pass away, and are replaced by consolation and peace. Glory to Your power, O Lord!

* * *

"*I am only a witness bearing testimony before Him of all things which you tell me.*"[33] The priests will be witnesses before the Saviour on the terrible day of judgment concerning sinners, whether they repented or not, of these or those sins, and they who were penitent will be forgiven. But why is it necessary for God to have witnesses when He *Himself* knows everything? It is written, "*[He] had no need that anyone should testify of*

man, for He knew what was in man" (John 2:25). For God this testimony is not necessary, but it is for us. It will be pleasant for us to see how the priests will bear witness concerning us before angels and men, that we repented of our sins, condemned ourselves, expressed loathing for sin, took the firm resolution not to sin. Remember the Saviour's words to the Apostles, "*You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them*" (Mark 13:9), and "*this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all nations*" (Matt 24:14).

* * *

Grant me, Lord, the grace to renounce myself, this devil that I have become by inheritance from Adam. Lord Jesus, New Adam, change me. Make me a new man; let me be clothed in You.

* * *

"*Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked shall be made straight … And all flesh shall see the salvation of God*" (Luke 3:5–6). The valley represents those who are humble of heart. The mountain and hill shall be brought low—these are the proud men who think highly of themselves and despise the lowly and humble. This is exactly what happens—the Lord unceasingly acts through the spirit of righteousness and mercy in the hearts of men, humbling the proud by various circumstances, such as diseases, losses, humiliation, and exalting the humble.

* * *

Flatterers are our greatest enemies. They blind our eyes, they do not let us see our many defects, and they thus hinder us on the way to perfection, especially if we ourselves are self-loving and not far-seeing. This is why we must always stop those who flatter us or avoid them entirely. It will be terrible for him who is surrounded by flatterers! Happy is he who is surrounded by simple-hearted people who do not hide the truth, even if it is unpleasant, concerning his weaknesses, faults, passions, and mistakes.

* * *

Whoever is joined to God loves his neighbor without fail, as if it were natural to him, because his neighbor is the image of God. And if he is a Christian, then he is also a child of God, a member of Christ the God-man, and his own member besides. "*For we are members one of another*" (Eph 4:25). "*We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones*" (Eph 5:30). However, he who loves God is indifferent to everything earthly—to food, drink, dainties, earthly beauty, dress, fame. He cannot serve two masters, for his heart is joined to the Lord; it is inundated by Him and by love for Him, and in the Lord everything earthly seems to vanish for him. Every worldly charm, even his own old sinful, passionate heart, vanishes and becomes united to God in one spirit. "*He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit*" (1 Cor 6:17), because he becomes enlightened in God and sees the true value of all things earthly and heavenly, especially the vanity, the uselessness of everything earthly. He sees the truth, the immeasurable superiority, and the eternity of spiritual blessings. He finds in God cleansing from sins and the holiness, peace, lightness, true freedom, and joy in the Holy Spirit which are natural to our spirit, but which we have lost. He also finds in God his natural spiritual food and drink, spiritual sweetness, spiritual raiment (shining, adorned, and white as snow). He finds unspeakable beauty that will eternally enrapture him, unattainable light that will eternally light him, and a home appropriate to the state of his soul, in the same way as he himself will be the abode of the Holy Trinity.

* * *

The Lord was crucified for us on the cross. This is the reason why the sign of the cross has such power. This is why it is life-giving. This is why even in the Old Testament its prototype had such great power. The pole upon which the serpent was set cured those who were bitten by serpents; the sign of the cross made by Moses's rod separated the waters; Moses's hands uplifted in prayer and forming the cross conquered Amalek, and so on.

* * *

As quickly as the pleasure of eating and drinking passes away for those sitting at a table dining, so shall the present life, with all its pleasures, joys, sorrows, and sicknesses also pass away. It is like morning dew, vanishing at the appearance of the sun. Therefore, the Christian, who is called to a

heavenly country, who is only a stranger and a sojourner upon earth, should not attach his heart to anything earthly, but should cling to God alone, the Source of life, our resurrection, and life eternal.

* * *

We must not look with shock and anger at the many sins, weaknesses, and passions of humanity, because they are all part of the ancient delusion, the infirmity of all mankind, and mankind by its own strength can never free itself from them. Therefore, a Saviour of mankind was necessary, not an intercessor, not an angel, but the Lord Himself incarnate. May He save me, the whole man! Therefore, we should despise human passions such as envy, malice, pride, avarice, greed, even when directed against us, and we must not be exasperated with those who are subjected to them, but rather we should be kind to them and influence them with words, persuasion, and inner prayer, as the Lord and His saints did to their enemies. This is the wisdom of a Christian life.

* * *

Strive constantly, every way you can, to give joy to the Heavenly Father with your life; that is, by your meekness, humility, gentleness, obedience, abstinence, wisdom, love of peace, patience, mercy, sincere friendship with worthy people, kindness to everybody, cordial hospitality, universal benevolence, honesty in business, simplicity of heart and character, and purity of thoughts. Teach and strengthen us, O God, to live according to Your will, for You are our Father, and we are Your children, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

* * *

Everyone must bear in mind that every man possesses a spiritual nature in addition to his animal nature. The animal nature has its needs, but so does the spiritual nature. The requirements of the animal nature are drink, food, sleep, breath, light, clothing, and warmth, while those of the spiritual nature are contemplation, emotion, speech, communion with God through prayer, divine services, the sacraments, instruction in the Word of God, and fellowship with our neighbor through conversation, charitable help, mutual

instruction, and learning. We must also bear in mind that our animal nature is temporal, transitory, and perishable, while our spiritual nature is eternal, imperishable, and indestructible. We must not forget that we must despise the flesh as perishable and care for the soul, which is immortal, for its salvation, its enlightenment, its cleansing from sins, passions, and vices, for its adornment with such virtues as meekness, humility, gentleness, courage, patience, submission, obedience to God and neighbor, purity, and abstinence. Grant wisdom, O Lord, to every person, that we may ever bear this in mind!

* * *

O Lord! Let not Your gifts, spiritual and material, remain idle within us. Grant that they may be exercised for our salvation. Do this for all mankind. May the number of Your talents be increased by the personal activity of each one of us.

* * *

Look at a spiteful, proud, arrogant man as you would at the wind, and do not be offended by his malice, pride, and arrogance, but remain calm in yourself. The enemy purposely irritates you, kindling the fire of the human passions, arousing in your heart various suspicions of an evil nature and imaginary fancies.

* * *

Pay attention not to the words of an arrogant man, but rather to their power. It often happens that words that appear harsh at first sight are not spoken from any harshness of the heart, but only from habit. How would it be if everyone paid strict, critical attention to our words, without indulgent, protective, kindly, and patient Christian love? We would have died long ago.

* * *

Do we, the chosen flock of Christ, we Orthodox Christians, live as we should? Do we walk in faith, do we live soberly in expectation of the

second coming of Christ and the terrible day of judgment? Do we tremble at the thought of everlasting torments? Do we thirst for eternal bliss? Or have we instead clung to this transitory life? "*But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation!*" (1 Pet 2:9). Keep a strict watch over yourselves. Much will be required of you. Is this how those who hope for resurrection and eternal life should live? Is this how we should live, we who have been given notice and firm confirmation of the truth and certainty of future torments from the true and Head of our faith, Who never lies?

* * *

How insignificant is the earth and earthly life in comparison with heaven, with Christ's eternal kingdom! And yet we attach ourselves so much to the earthly things and care so little for the salvation of the soul, for eternal life!

* * *

Luxuries, money are worse than mere dust and dirt, because they sully the soul. Ordinary dust only sullies the body, clothing, or room. O, how necessary it is to despise luxuries, money, and clothing as well!

* * *

Our life is simple, because our life is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the most simple eternal Being Who has no beginning. "*God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son*" (1 John 5:11). Why, then, do we seek life in men, in enjoyments, in money, in honors, in dress, etc.? There is no life for the heart in these things, but only affliction, constraint, and spiritual death. Why do we forsake the Fountain of living water—the Lord, and hew out "*cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water*"? (Jer 2:13). For what purpose do we rush about and worry? Why are we so greedy for pleasures, money, honors, dress, and various other things? All these are dead, perishable, transitory. The devil, who has the power of death, is also a simple being, and he catches us in his snares, wounding us to death. This is why we must be on our guard and not attach ourselves to anything, lest we be hurt by him.

* * *

Avoid living for carnal motives and desires only; that is, only for sleeping, eating, dressing, walking, then repeating it all again. Such a way of life will finally, completely kill a person's spiritual life, making him quite earthly, a creature of the earth. On the contrary, the Christian, even during his life on earth, should be heavenly. "*For the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt 3:2). Our Father, Who art in heaven! We should read the Word of God more frequently, pray more often at home and in church and in every place (of course more inwardly than outwardly), meditate more often on God, the creation, the calling and purpose of man, God's providence, the redemption, God's unspeakable love to mankind, the lives and glorious deeds of the saints, who pleased God by their manifold virtues, etc. Also we should fast, examine our conscience, repent sincerely and deeply of our sins, and so on!

* * *

God’s wisdom, mercy, and omnipotence may be observed above all in the fact that the Lord places each one of us in such a position that if we wish, we can bring to God the fruits of good works, even save ourselves and others. Out of the greatest sinners, He makes righteous men who obey His grace that leads to salvation, and wonderfully He saves us from all misfortunes, rescuing us even from destruction itself.

* * *

You wish others to quickly correct their faults, but do you correct yourself? Do you not suffer from the same infirmity as others? Is it not through you, through your not correcting yourself, that others linger in their sins and passions?

* * *

Always do the opposite of what the enemy suggests to you. If he suggests that you hate those who offend you, you must love them and bless those who curse you. Do not torment those who take away your property, but give it away willingly. When you want to laugh, weep instead. When you feel despondent, endeavor to be glad. When you feel envious, rejoice at the prosperity of others. When you are inclined to contradiction and disobedience, immediately submit and agree. When impure thoughts occur to you, be zealous for the purity of your heart, calling to mind the high destiny of the Christian, made god-like in Christ Jesus, and remember that our members are the members of Christ. When you feel proud, humble yourself. When you are spiteful, force yourself to be especially kind. When you are irritable, preserve calmness. When you incline to avarice, be generous. When you are distracted, immediately close off your senses to all outward things and contemplate on the “one thing needful.” When you feel doubt, weak faith, unbelief, then especially call firm faith to your help, reminding yourself of the examples of faith or of believers from the Old and New Testaments, as well as the miracles accomplished by faith, and so on. Do this, and do not succumb to the enemy, for all passions, passionate attachments, and caprices are of his imagination.

* * *

You will spend the feast day well, to the glory of God and the salvation of your soul, if you refrain from such passions as malice, pride, covetousness, envy, avarice, intemperance, laziness, inattention, carelessness in pleasing God, and neglect of your soul, and if you practice the virtues opposite to these passions, as well as other good works. You will devote the feast day to Satan, not to God, if you spend such a day absorbed in your passions and vices. You will spend Sunday (the day of Resurrection) well if your soul rises from the dead to God, forsaking unrighteous acts, if you are reborn and renewed by grace. But you will spend the day badly, without purpose, if you do not rid your heart of your anger, covetousness, or attachments to earthly things, if your soul is not inflamed by heavenly love, by the love of God, by the love of the heavenly country, and the life that never grows old, which is prefigured by Sunday, the day of Resurrection, the day of the Sun of righteousness.

* * *

Beggars every day pursue you. This means that God's mercy continually pursues you. "*Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy*" (Matt 5:7). Who will seek to flee from God's mercy?

* * *

God's saints value, more than any of us, the great act of the redemption of mankind by God, the descent of the Son of God from heaven, His teaching, His suffering, death, burial, Resurrection, and Ascension into heaven, for they spent all their lives in working out their own and others' salvation, sincerely, firmly, infallibly, with their whole hearts. For the sake of their own and others' salvation, they renounced themselves, fasted, prayed, watched, battled, labored in deed and word with their minds and their pens. But we do not understand how to value such great acts. We are cold, distracted, heedless, more occupied with the visible world and its goods, which are nothing but smoke.

* * *

I commit my whole life and everything by which I live, all my spiritual and bodily needs, unto Christ my God, the Provider, the Ruler, and the

Saviour, for everything is in His hands. As for me, I have only to zealously fulfill His commandments.

* * *

Do not allow me, O Lord, even for an instant to do the will of our enemy, the devil, but grant that I may continually do Your will alone, the will of my God and my King, the true King in Whom all kings reign. Grant that I may ever obey You, reverence You truly and firmly. "*O come, let us worship and fall down before Him, and weep before the Lord that made us. Serve the Lord in fear, and rejoice unto Him with trembling*" (Psalm 94:6; 1:11).

* * *

How should one use the gifts of intelligence, feeling, and freedom? With our intelligence, we must learn to know God in the works of His creation, revelation, providence, and in the destinies of men. With the heart, we must learn to feel God's love, His heavenly peace, the sweetness of His love. We must love our neighbor, sympathize with him in joy and sorrow, in health and sickness, in poverty and wealth, in distinction and low estate (humiliation). We must use our freedom as a means, an instrument for doing as much good as possible, and to perfect ourselves in every virtue, in order to render to God worthy fruits a hundredfold.

* * *

All the saints in heaven and all true Christians on earth are "*one body and one spirit*" (Eph 4:4). This is why the prayer of believers is heard so easily and quickly and truly in heaven, and why one should have hope when calling upon the saints. But to make our prayers always easily and speedily heard by the saints, we must have the same spirit as they—the spirit of faith and love for God and our neighbor, the spirit of meekness, humility, abstinence, purity, chastity, bravery, courage, a thirst after righteousness, a spirit of compassion, heavenly and not earthly.

* * *

Consider yourself worse and more infirm than all others in the spiritual life. Despise, hate yourself for your sins (this is pious and right!), and be indulgent to others. Respect and love them in spite of their sins, for the sake of God, Who commanded us to respect and love all men, and also because they are created after His image, even though they bear the wounds of sin, and because they are members of Jesus Christ.

* * *

The Lord sometimes suddenly sends bountiful material gifts, such as money in payment for some very easy work, and thus He rewards you for the expenditure you have incurred in giving alms to your neighbor. In general, He freely bestows upon us the bountiful gifts of His mercy, in order that we should not grudge His gifts to those whom He sends to us, or whom He allows to take our property, which He has given us so that we should not quarrel among ourselves, but should live in love and harmony. Should our neighbor rob us of our property, we should not be upset, but should bear it meekly, trusting to God to punish the offender. You know that the Lord Himself meekly allowed even His garments to be taken from Him and His very body to be tortured on the cross, and all for your sake, to teach you meekness and gentleness in all misfortunes and offenses.

* * *

God is good and goodness itself, and you, His image, must also be good. He is generous to all, and you also must be generous and avoid avarice, never grudging your neighbor anything material, perishable, because this is the greatest misfortune and foolishness.

* * *

Who or what are our idols? Certain people, our fleeting life, our mortal body full of passions, and the things relating to it, such as food, drink, dress, ornaments, distinctions, money, house, furniture, etc. When the tempter attacks you through attachments to visible things, when he inspires trust in visible things such as food, money, and so on, then steadfastly lift up the eyes of your heart toward the invisible and eternal. First, lift them up to the invisible and eternal God, the Source of our life; secondly, toward the

invisible life that has no ending, toward the eternal bliss of the righteous after this transitory life. When he suggests that you should live only for corruptible things, you must strive for incorruptible life; when he attracts your eyes to the human body, disregarding its immortal soul, you must turn your mental gaze still more steadfastly upon the soul of the man, created in God's image and likeness, redeemed by the suffering and death of the Son of God upon the Cross, made to inherit eternal blessings, adopted by God, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the Bride of the Holy Spirit. Avoid duplicity and do not let your heart be divided between attachment to God and attachment to earthly things, for "*you cannot serve God and mammon*" (Matt 6:24). Cling to God alone, put your trust in Him alone, for the devil, by inciting us to duplicity, seeks to gain possession of our heart, which is whole and indivisible. And remember that to attach yourself to God is always good, blessed, while to attach yourself to the world and its blessings is evil, painful, sorrowful, oppressive, for attachment to the world is a delusion of the devil.

* * *

The lot of everything on earth—my body, enjoyments, clothing, treasures—is destruction, corruption, and disappearance, but the spirit lives forever. May my soul remember this and not grieve at the loss of anything temporal, perishable, but rather let it be zealous for eternal, imperishable matters—God, the fulfillment of His commandments, the unity of love, a peaceful disposition, patience, temperance, chastity, self-denial, indifference to all earthly beauties and enjoyments, seeking the one thing needful, endeavoring not to imitate the evil and not to envy those that work iniquity. Let others take away your dross! Do not be envious or irritated.

* * *

The Lord has made us His Own (O, highest honor and dignity!), but through our sins we alienate ourselves from our Master, Who has given us birth by water and the Spirit. The Lord has most truly joined Himself to us by His Flesh and Blood (Heb 2:14), which are united with His soul and Divinity, but we, through our sins and vices, join ourselves in the closest manner to God's enemy and our own.

* * *

When praying with others, sometimes it seems like we have to burst through a wall with our prayer, a wall of human souls hardened and ossified by earthly passions. We have to penetrate the Egyptian darkness, the darkness of passions and worldly attachments. This is why it is sometimes difficult to pray. The simpler the people, the easier the prayer.

* * *

If God had not become incarnate, if He had not deified us, if He had not taught us by His own example how to live, what to hope for, and what to expect, if He had not pointed out to us another perfect and eternal life, if He had not suffered and died and risen from the dead, then we would still have had some justification to live as we all now live—a mostly carnal, earthly life. But now, we should contemplate higher things and count all earthly things but rubbish (Phil 3:8), for everything earthly is nothing in comparison with heavenly things. Meanwhile, the devil, the father of lies, contrary to the Saviour's teaching and spirit, teaches us to attach ourselves to earthly goods and forcibly nails our pleasure-loving heart to them. The heart naturally seeks happiness, and the devil gives a false direction to this tendency and allures the heart by earthly happiness—riches, honors, splendid dress, furniture, silver, carriages, gardens, and various other amusements.

* * *

Trust completely in God's providence, in the Lord's Will, and do not grieve at losing anything material. Do not rejoice when you gain earthly riches, but let your only and constant joy be the Lord Himself. Trust entirely in Him. He knows how to lead you safely through this present life and how to bring you to Himself, into His eternal Kingdom. From lack of trust in God's providence many great afflictions occur—despondency, complaining, envy, avarice, love of money, a passion for hoarding money and property in general, so that they may last for many years and so you can eat, drink, sleep, and enjoy them to your heart's content. From lack of trust in God's providence, some very particular calamities occur—loss of income through our own oversight, the loss of especially valuable and necessary

objects, immoderate joy at recovering certain objects or at receiving some large income or gain, or some profitable place or employment. We, as Christians, as "*fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God*" (Eph 2:19), should commit all our life, together with all its sorrows, sicknesses, grief, joys, scarcities, and abundance, unto Christ our God.

* * *

"*He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts*" (Magnificat). "*He has shown strength with His arm*" means that the Lord, through His Incarnation, came to reign over the enemies of our salvation, and having conquered them by His power and made His Mother Sovereign Queen of heaven and earth, "*He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts*" (i.e., the devil and the powers assisting him, the spirits of evil). He conquered them on the Cross, scattering their hordes. "*He has put down the mighty from their thrones*" (i.e., the fallen angel, Satan, who reigned over mankind), and "*exalted the lowly*" (i.e., the Mother of God and all humble Christians). "*He has filled the hungry with good things,*" such as that same most-pure, gracious Lady and the saints, and "*the rich He has sent away empty*" (Luke 1:51–54), the rich being the demons who would have richly filled the abysses of hell with prisoners—human souls that were brought to the light of Christ's Kingdom by the Saviour when He descended into hell.

* * *

We only call the Lord God, but in actual fact we have our own gods, because we do not do the will of God, but the will and thoughts of our flesh, the will of our heart, the will of our passions. Our gods are our flesh, pleasures, money, dress, etc.

* * *

What vanities, what foolish fancies often occupy most of us, even within sight of the highest, most important objects of faith, within sight of the greatest holiness. For instance, sometimes when a man stands before the icons of the Lord, the Mother of God, an angel or Archangel, a saint or a

whole assembly of saints, at home or in the church, instead of praying, instead of laying aside all earthly cares, he counts up his money, going over his expenses and receipts. He rejoices at the gain and grieves at the loss of profits or the failure of some undertaking without, of course, a single thought of his spiritual profit or loss. Or else, he thinks evil of his neighbor, exaggerating his weakness and his passions, suspecting him, envying him, judging him. If he stands in church, he looks at the faces of those standing near him, how they are dressed, who is attractive and who is not. Or he makes plans for whatever pleasure or vanity that will occupy his day, and so on. This often happens at the time when the greatest, the most divine sacrament of the Eucharist, the most-pure Body and Blood of our Lord, is being celebrated. Then, we must be entirely in God, entirely occupied in contemplating the mystery accomplished for our sake, our redemption from sin, and the eternal curse of death, the mystery of our deification in the Lord Jesus Christ. How low we have fallen, how earthly minded we have become, and why? Because we are inattentive and neglect our salvation, because we are attached to temporal things, because we are weak in faith, or entirely lacking in faith.

* * *

How is it that all nature and everything in it is so wisely arranged and moves in such wonderful order? It is because the Creator Himself directs and governs it. How is it that in the nature of man—the crown of creation—there is so much disorder? Why are there so many irregularities and horrors in his life? Because he took it upon himself to direct and govern his life, contrary to the will and wisdom of his Creator. Sinful man! Commit yourself and all your life unto the Lord your God, and your life will move in wise, beautiful, stately, and life-giving order, and will become as beautiful as the lives of God’s saints, who committed themselves completely to Christ their God, and whom the Church daily offers to us as examples to imitate.

* * *

Value highly and always preserve in yourself Christian meekness and kindness, mutual peace and love, crushing by every possible means the impulses of self-love, anger, irritability, and confusion. Do not be confused

and angry when anybody lies to your face, or expresses any unjust grievances, or speaks offensively, or boldly detects any of your weaknesses or passions, the wrongfulness of which, through your self-love, you did not suspect. Always first calmly reflect over your opponent's words, as well as your own words and conduct, and if, after an entirely impartial consideration of your own words and actions, you find them just, then let your conscience be at rest and do not heed the words of your accuser, either remaining silent before him, or indicating his error quietly, gently, in all kindness of heart. However, should you find yourself guilty of that which your adversary indicated in you, then, putting aside self-love and pride, ask pardon for your fault and endeavor to correct yourself in future. We are often angry with straightforward, frank people for openly disclosing our iniquities. Instead, we should value such people and forgive them, if by their bold speaking they offend our self-love. They are, in a moral sense, the surgeons who cut off the gangrene of the heart with a sharp word, and by arousing our self-love, they awaken a consciousness of sin and a vital response in the soul deadened by sin.

* * *

"*The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt 11:12), If we daily strive to conquer the passions, that war against us and to gain the Kingdom of God in our heart, then the passions will tyrannically, forcibly take possession of us. They will invade our soul like robbers. Our attachments to earthly things will increase in proportion to the weakening of our faith and love for heavenly blessings. Our love for God and our neighbor will also grow weaker and weaker; we shall enjoy a quiet conscience and peace of heart more and more rarely. We must struggle in the matter of the salvation of the soul, which is more precious than anything else in the world. We must count everything earthly as dross, a phantom, a hallucination. Everything heavenly, on the other hand, and above all the Lord Himself, we must consider as truth itself, eternal, most-blessed, and unchangeable.

* * *

We all love life, we are all are anxious, and we all strive for a happy life, and yet our life is corrupted by passions. Why? Because we do not seek life

where we should.

* * *

Young people and adults! Remember that the moral law of God continually acts in the world, according to which every good is inwardly rewarded, while every evil is punished. Evil is accompanied by sorrow and oppression in the heart, while good is accompanied by peace, joy, and expansion of the heart. This law is unchangeable, for it is the law of the immutable all-holy, righteous, most-wise, and eternal God. Those who do good or fulfill this moral law of the Gospel (which *is* a moral code, only for those seeking perfection) shall be inevitably rewarded by eternal life, while its transgressors and those who have not repented of their transgressions shall be punished by eternal torment.

* * *

God is "He Who Is." In Him, all the saints and all reasonable and free beings are united. "*As You, Father, art in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us*" (John 17:21). I myself am nothing. God is everything in me, God is in all, and God is everything to all. "Our Father, Who art in heaven!"

* * *

When you pray to the Lord God in Three Persons, remember that you are calling upon the unoriginate Father of all creatures, angels, and men. Remember that all the heavenly powers are amazed and look with love on you, since you are able to speak with faith, love, and reverence to the Father of all, the Almighty, Creator and Lord, Whom they love without limit, Whom they reverence deeply. O, what great happiness and blessedness, what an honor, how sublime a thing it is to be able to call upon the eternal Father! Value continually and constantly this highest happiness, this blessedness which the infinite mercy of God has reserved for you, and do not forget it during the time of your prayer. God hears you, God's saints and angels hear you. I shed tears as I wrote these lines (February 26, 1864).

* * *

"*Christ is all and in all*" (Col 3:11)—in the holy angels, in holy men, and in Christians living or striving to live a holy life on earth. "*And gave Him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is His body*" (Eph 1:22, 23). Thus, the Church—God's saints, the Mother of God, the angels, the hierarchs, the martyrs, the holy fathers, the venerable ones, and all holy people—is the Saviour's body, and He Himself is the Head. Our Lady, the Mother of God, is the Queen of noetic edification, that is, She and all the saints are one spirit with the Lord, so pure and holy are they, and they have the same relation to Him, or the same union with Him, as the members of a body to the head, and there is one spirit in them, the Spirit of God. As the soul is in one body, so is the one God and Father in them. And we, as the members of the earthly Church, are also one body.

* * *

Our Lady, the Mother of God, is the most beautifully adorned temple of the Holy Trinity. She is, after God, the treasury of all blessings, purity, holiness, all true wisdom, the source of spiritual power and strength.

* * *

We are one body of love. Food, drink, money, dress, houses, all earthly attributes are *nothing*, but man is everything. Nothing is so precious as man. Man, in his soul, is immortal, while everything material is perishable and ephemeral. Everything material is like dust. Everything is God's; nothing is ours. Man! Esteem the dignity of man, the image of God, and in the time of his need, do not grudge him any material help.

* * *

Everything, except true love, is an illusion. If a friend behaves coldly, rudely, spitefully, insolently to you, say to yourself that this is an illusion of the enemy. If you are disturbed by a sense of antagonism arising from your friend's coldness and insolence, say to yourself that this is an illusion of mine, but the truth is that I love my friend, in spite of everything, and I do not wish to see this evil in him, which is an illusion of the demon, and which is in me also. I will be compassionate to his faults, for they are in me also. We both have the same sinful nature. You say that your friend has sins

and great defects? So do you. You say that you do not love him because of such and such sins and defects. Then you should stop loving yourself as well, because you have the same sins and defects as he has. But remember that the Lamb of God took upon Himself the sins of the whole world. “Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant” for his sins, defects, and vices? Everyone “*to his own master he stands or falls*” (Rom 14:4). But you must be compassionate with Christian love in every possible way to the faults of your neighbor, you must cure him of his wickedness, his spiritual infirmity (for every coldness, every passion is an infirmity) with love, kindness, meekness, humility, as you yourself would wish to receive from others when you suffer from a similar infirmity. For who is not subject to infirmity? Whom does the most evil enemy spare? Lord! Destroy all the snares of the enemy in us.

* * *

Remember who man is. He is the image of God, a child of God, a Christian, an inheritor of the Kingdom, a member of Christ. We must therefore esteem every man, although he may bear in his soul the wounds of sins. But let these wounds be. They are inflicted by the devil and sin, but still man doesn’t lose the image of God. We must have compassion on him for his wounds, grieve, pray for him as for ourselves, for we are all one body. “*And He has made from one blood every nation of men*” (Acts 17:26). “*We all partake of that one bread*” (1 Cor 10:17). Pay no attention to diabolical confusion, enmity, and animosity. Repeat: we are all one. Say it again: we are all one.

* * *

Count all worldly sweetness as garbage and rot. Do not love anything earthly, do not grudge anything earthly to any man, and do not nourish any animosity against people on account of these things. Love aspires to give joy to the beloved and spares nothing.

* * *

Lord, grant that I may see my transgressions, that I may not despise sinners like myself, and that I may not nourish any animosity in my heart

against them for their sins, that I may despise myself as I deserve, as the greatest of sinners, and that I may ever feel an implacable hatred of myself, of my own carnal man: "*If anyone comes to Me and does not hate … and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple*" (Luke 14:26), says the Lord.

* * *

God is the Creator and Ruler of the whole world, and everything in it is His work, the fruit of His power and wisdom.

* * *

There is no need to ask anyone if we should preach the Glory of God in writing, in word, and through good works. We are obliged to do this, according to our strength and circumstances. We must make use of our talents. If you start thinking too much about such an obvious matter, then the devil will definitely suggest foolish thoughts to you, such as the idea that you need only be active in your inner spiritual life.

* * *

The principal characteristic of this present, temporal life is temptation.

* * *

What is sweeter than love? And yet there is so little love in us! Why is this? It is because we love our flesh too much, and with it everything carnal, material, and earthly! Let us, therefore, despise the flesh and walk in the spirit, mortifying the works of the flesh by the spirit.

* * *

Covetousness brings about the desolation of love and inspires hatred against those who deprive or rob us of our money. On the other hand, heartfelt generosity arouses love for those to whom we are generous. Forced generosity, however, also produces dislike. Covetousness is inspired by the devil, while generosity is of God. He is the Father of bounties. Every attachment to material things proceeds from the devil; neglect, contempt of

material things, and indifference to them for the love of God is from God. Amen.

* * *

"*My yoke is easy and My burden is light*" (Matt 11:30). This is how easy and light are the Lord's commandments. But the devil's yoke is evil, and his burden is heavy. But what do we see? We transgress the Lord's commandments and fulfill those of the devil. How accursed we are!

* * *

Always remember that your neighbor, whoever he may be, if he is a Christian, he is a member of Christ. He may be an infirm Christian, but then you yourself are also sick, and you must always receive him with respect and love, wholeheartedly converse with him, entertain him, and never grudge him anything—food, drink, clothing, books, money, if he has need of them. The Lord will reward you for his sake. We are all His children, and He is everything to us. We are all sinners, and "*the wages of sin*" are misfortunes, troubles, sorrow and sickness, and death (Rom 6:23). In order to be saved from sin, we must pray; and in order to pray, we must have faith and hope. Thus, for us sinners, prayer, faith, and hope are most necessary. Prayer should never cease in the heart of a sinner, or even on his lips.

* * *

When you pray at home or at church to be delivered from the wiles of the devil and the distraction of your thoughts, remind yourself of the simplicity of truth, and say to yourself: I believe that I will receive everything I ask in the simplicity of my heart, and I ask for everything simply; while I reject all my enemy's cunning, blasphemies, abominations, and delusions. Let the origin, the foundation, and the source of all your thoughts, words, and works be humility, the consciousness of your own nothingness, and the corresponding greatness of the Divinity Who created everything and fills all things, and "*works all in all*" (1 Cor 12:6). He who is infected by pride is inclined to show contempt for everything, even for holy and divine objects. In his mind, pride destroys or defiles every good thought, word, act, every creation of God. Pride is the fatal breath of Satan.

* * *

What hinders you from fulfilling Christ's commandments? The flesh and the world—pleasant food and drink, in which people delight both in thought and in action, making the heart coarse and hard, a partiality for elegant dress and adornment, or for distinctions and awards. If one's clothing or accessories are made of very beautifully colored and delicate materials, then people worry and get anxious about avoiding stains or dirt, or getting them dusty or wet. In the meantime, anxiety to please God in thought, word, and deed vanish, and the heart lives for clothing and adornment, becoming entirely engrossed in these things, ceasing to care about God and being united to Him. If this is the case with a priest, then he neglects praying for his people and becomes not soul-loving, but money-loving and ambitious, seeking not people (i.e., souls), but the things that belong to them, such as money, food, drink, favor, good opinion, a good word, and flattery. Therefore, fight against every worldly attraction, against every material enticement that hinders you from fulfilling Christ's commandments. Love God with all your heart and care with all your strength for the salvation of your own soul and the souls of others. Be a lover of souls. Remember that the world, which was created from nothing, is indeed nothing, and it will return to nothing, for heaven and earth shall pass away, but the human soul, the breath of God, the image of the immortal King is immortal. Remember all this and renounce your attachment to all earthly things. Instead of heaping your attention to corruptible creatures and created things, turn your eyes constantly to the Creator, Who is in every creature and Who constantly looks upon you, testing your heart and your thoughts. Do not cling with your heart to any thing, and do not make it the god of your heart. The sole God of our heart must be the Lord God, Who created our heart, for it is His very breath. Do not cleave with your whole heart to any person, to any flesh, for the sole God of our heart must be the Lord God, and to Him alone must we cleave. For attachment to material things or to flesh is a delusion and an enticement of Satan and the will of the devil. Amen.

* * *

By attaching ourselves to the worthless and fleeting, what do we lose? Of what blessings do we deprive ourselves? The Lord has told you, my soul,

that the whole visible world in comparison to you is nothing. Therefore, consider it as nothing and see for what purpose the Creator has created you and what He wishes to make you. Remember the descent of the Son of God to earth, His ministry on the earth with the good news of heavenly truth, His voluntary poverty, His miracles and prophecies, His last supper, His shame, His suffering, His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. Aspire to heavenly blessedness!

* * *

True love eagerly bears privations, troubles, and labors; it endures offenses, humiliations, defects, sins, and injustices if they do no harm to others. It bears patiently and meekly the depravity and anger of others, leaving judgment to the all-seeing God, the righteous Judge, and praying that He may teach those who are darkened by senseless passions.

* * *

During prayer and when reading God's Word, we must give honor to every thought, every word, as though they were the Spirit of God Himself, the Spirit of Truth. We must cut off any doubt and contempt for the Word as poison, the spirit of falsehood. Since doubt and contempt are the fruits of conceit and pride, we must also eradicate pride and be like children in our simplicity before God, like children who know and say only that which their parents have taught them and who do not hear or know any suggestions different to those of their parents, and do not even wish to listen to or know them. For the Holy Spirit taught the Holy Fathers, like simple-hearted and gentle children, how to pray—to thank and praise God using the prayers that the Church puts into our mouths. Remember that all of us are the children of the Heavenly Father, and in the simplicity of your soul look at all people as the children of the Eternal Father, Who is holy, most good, everywhere present, omniscient, almighty, most wise, righteous, unchangeable, providing for all, and protecting all under the wings of His goodness. Strive to live in love with all, conquering every evil in people with good.

* * *

What a high dignity, honor, and happiness it is to pray for people, for this precious possession and inheritance of God! With what gladness, boldness, zeal, and love must we pray to God, the Father of mankind, for His people, redeemed by the blood of His Son! "*These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits to God and to the Lamb*" (Rev 14:4). Hear, O priests of God! You often speak with God using a specially prepared rule of prayer. Do not let your tongue speak falsely, your lips saying one thing and your heart another, not feeling the power of your words. If you are praying for anyone, do not let there be any devilish craftiness and duplicity in your heart, but pray to the Almighty God, "*Who triest the very hearts and reins*" (Psalm 7:10), with your heart as well as your lips. In order that you may always pray sincerely to the Lord God, despise everything earthly. Do not be attached to all the goods and delights of this seductive, corrupt, and fleeting world—food, drink, pleasures, money, dress, various ornaments and awards, the comfort of your temporary abode. Consider all this as garbage, rot, quickly passing away. Be temperate; love God with all your heart, undividedly, not superficially. Love him with all your mind and all your strength, not partially, so that nothing could tear you away from the love of God—neither sorrow, nor oppression, nor persecutions and misfortunes, nor death, nor life, nor anything else. Love your neighbor as your own self, magnanimously bearing with his faults, infirmities, errors, the outbreaks of his passions. Remember, it is a great matter to converse with God, Who continually sees us, continually hears us, testing our heart and inner state. Do not let your heart lie; do not let it be cold toward God and your neighbor during the time of prayer for your neighbor. Remember, God shall judge you for everything, for every idle or insincere word. And meanwhile, the eternal enemy, the father of lies, the devil, does not slumber, endeavoring by all means possible to harden your passionate heart and to make it insensible, false, and crafty. Constantly, he tries to cast out faith and hope in God from your heart, as well as love for Him and love and sympathy for your neighbor. Instead, he tries to occupy you solely with worldly, temporal interests. Watch, watch yourself and the thoughts of your heart, O priest of God, and do not bind yourself by worldly, carnal desires and pleasures. Let your happiness be the one God and the human soul; be a lover of souls, not money or sensual pleasures. Lord, accomplish all this Yourself, for without You we can do nothing (John 15:5). So be it! So be it!

* * *

The most merciful and generous Lord is everything to everyone and to me, a miserable sinner, and I have nothing of mine own. I renounce all my possessions. I should reverently thank God for everything—for air, light, water, every mouthful of food, clothes. Everything, even our bodies themselves, are indeed only earth and water. Amen.

* * *

We are all one, and must love one another as ourselves. Selfish regret after giving to another and annoyance during giving come from the devil. Every passionate attachment to earthly things is a delusion of the devil and our own self-love.

* * *

What does the Holy Church impress on us when it gives us prayers not only on behalf of ourselves, but for all people, both during private prayer and in church? She impresses on us the need for constant, mutual love, so that we should always love others as ourselves at all times, in every circumstance, during prayer and during worldly conversation. We, imitating God in three Persons Who constitutes the ultimate Unity, should ourselves be one, formed of many. "*That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us*" (John 17:21). Common prayer on behalf of all people teaches us also to share our earthly needs with others, so that in life we may have everything in common and as one. In other words, mutual love should be evident in everything. Every person should use his abilities for the good of others, not hiding his talent in the earth; he should be neither selfish nor idle. If you are wise, give advice to the foolish. If you are educated, teach the ignorant. If you are strong, help the weak. If you are rich, help the poor.

* * *

When you pray alone and your spirit is dejected, when you are wearied and oppressed by your loneliness, remember then, as always, that the Tri-hypostatic God looks at you with eyes brighter than the sun, as do all the

angels, your own guardian angel, and all the saints of God. Truly they do, for they are all one in God, and where God is, there they are also. Wherever the sun is, there you will also find all its rays. Try to understand what this means. Always pray with a fervent heart, and to attain to this, never eat and drink excessively. Remember with Whom you are conversing. People very often forget with Whom they are conversing during prayer, and Who witnesses their prayer. They forget that they are conversing with the Vigilant and the All-seeing God, and that the Heavenly Hosts and the saints of God are listening to their conversation.

* * *

If enemies surround you and you are in spiritual distress, call immediately upon our Most-holy Lady. She is a Queen Who reigns, by Her sovereign power, over the powers that oppose us, and She has the power to give up powerful help, for we are Her inheritance.

* * *

We are all one, and the Lord is everything for everyone—for the angels, the saints, all material worlds, and each smallest part of them. "*Look at the birds of the air … Consider the lilies of the field … If God so clothes the grass of the field … will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"* (Matt 6:26, 28). "*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*" (Matt 6:30, 33). This is the most indispensable truth for you. Follow it! Set your hope in everything on God. "*Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you*" (1 Pet 5:7). Indeed, how is it possible to live as we live, as though there were no God caring for us? We think to order everything ourselves. We think to provide for ourselves, setting aside the thought of God, Who cares for us all.

* * *

Do not merely disdain pleasures and fine things, but scorn even your own sinful flesh, for in the slightest attachment to these things, you anger God. "*While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things*

which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor 4:18). You see, therefore, that you are not to pay any attention to visible things. Leave them alone, as though they did not exist; but instead, pay attention to invisible things, for the former are temporal, and the latter eternal. In addition, if you seek the invisible, then God will provide the visible to you, as He has done until now.

* * *

How wonderful it is to be a Christian, and above all to be a Christian priest, for he becomes one with Christ and God the Saviour through the Holy Mysteries!

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When communing of the Holy Mysteries yourself, O priest, say in your heart: "Come to me, Giver of Life, rescue me from the jaws of the serpent of hell, cleanse me from the impurity of passions, appease my troubled heart, give life to my deadened soul, bring joy to my sorrowful and despondent spirit. Come, feed me, starving from sinful hunger; clothe me, naked of every virtue; strengthen me, the infirm; honor me, the dishonored; exalt me, the base; ennoble me, the despised; enlighten my darkened soul. You bestow every blessing on me. I thank You, O Most Merciful One!"

* * *

Our heart is like the dark earth. The Gospel is like the sun, enlightening and giving life to our hearts. May the true sun of Your righteousness shine in our hearts, O Lord!

* * *

When I look closely at some of the poor and talk with them, then I see how they are meek, gentle, humble, simple-hearted, truly desirous of others' good, poor in body, but rich in spirit. They make me, who am rough, proud, evil, scornful, irritable, cunning, cold toward God and man, envious and avaricious, ashamed of myself. These are the true friends of God. And the enemy, being aware of their spiritual treasures, awakens in his servants

(i.e., in proud, rich men) contempt and enmity for them, inspiring in them the desire to wipe them off the face of the earth, as if they had no right to live and walk on it. O, friends of my God, my poor brothers! It is you who are the truly rich in spirit, while I am the real beggar, accursed and poor! You are worthy of sincere respect from us who possess the blessings of this world in abundance, but who are poor and lacking in virtues—abstinence, meekness, humility, kindness, sincerity, fervor, and warmth toward God and our neighbor. Lord! Teach me to despise outward things, to turn the eyes of my mind inward, and to value inner blessings, despise external good things. Help me act in the same way to the rich and powerful of this world!

* * *

A miser values things and does not value the person who needs these things; he begrudges things, but has no compassion for the person, though the person is a priceless being. He does begrudge himself anything, but he hates giving to others. He loves himself, and does not love others. But all things are dross, passing away like water. The inexhaustible Lord is everything to everyone. He has subdued the whole world like dust and hay under the feet of man.

* * *

"*Love suffers long*" (1 Cor 13:4). It does not immediately punish the one who sins, but patiently endures his lapses, teaching and correcting him, while the nature of anger is to immediately strike an antagonist or to make him unhappy, pushing him to extremes. It is amazing how evil and impatient we are! If our brother has sinned, we are not sorry that he sins, we do not weep from brotherly love at his willing insanity, at his passion; but instead we bear a grudge against him, we despise him for his sins. Meanwhile, perhaps we ourselves are guilty of the same, and were ourselves compassionately forgiven our sins, and only thanks to the condescension of our superiors, have at last somehow corrected ourselves of these failings, passions, and vices, becoming good for something. If we happen to be guilty of the same sins, even if not to the same degree as our erring brother, it means that we too are answerable for them. How, then, can we be otherwise than compassionate to our sinful brothers? Thus, when we punish others for sins and crimes, we must also remember our own

weaknesses, our vices and passions, past and present, and punish our subordinates with love, pity, and patience, not angrily, without pity, impatiently, hastily. "*In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will*" (2 Tim 2:25, 26). It was not without reason that the Apostle Paul indicated long-suffering and mercy as the first signs of our love for our neighbor: "*Love suffers long and is kind*" (1 Cor 13:4), for every man is infirm, weak, rash, easily inclined to every sin, but at the same time he may also easily think better of it, rise up, and repent under favorable circumstances. Therefore, it is necessary to be patient to his infirmities and sins, as we ourselves would wish others to be indulgent to our infirmities. When we see these sins, let it be as though we do not see them and do not notice them. But in those cases, however, where the sin damages another person, or when it is connected with the dereliction of the duties of our calling, or when it becomes too egregious, then we must immediately and firmly restrain it or put a stop to it, or remove the harmful person from people of good intentions. "*Put away from yourselves the evil person*" (1 Cor 5:13).

* * *

God did not even spare His Only-begotten Son for our sake. How, then, after this can we begrudge anything to our neighbor, either food, drink, clothing, or money, for his various needs? The Lord gives much to some and little to others, in order that we may provide for each other. The Lord has so ordered that if we willingly share the bountiful gifts of His mercy with others, then they will benefit our souls and bodies by opening our hearts to the love of our neighbor. At the same time, our moderation in using them also benefits our body, because it does not become satiated and burdened by immoderate food or drink. But if we use these gifts selfishly, avariciously, greedily, for ourselves only, and begrudge them to others, then they become harmful to our soul and body. They harm the soul, because greed and avarice close the heart to the love of God and neighbor, making us repulsive self-lovers and increasing all our passions. They harm the body, because greed overfills us and prematurely impairs our health.

* * *

We should confess our sins more frequently in order to strike and scourge our sins with an open acknowledgment and in order to feel a greater loathing for them. Think, man, into what misery audacious sin has cast you, and what has been done for your salvation by our Master, Christ, the Son of God. Remember His Incarnation, His voluntary self-emptying, His conversing with people, His words, His miracles, how He was mocked, reviled, spat upon, scourged, buffeted. Finally, remember His most shameful crucifixion on the cross, His death and burial, and His resurrection from the dead. Think what he bore to save us from everlasting torments and what he requires from you in return—that you should commit yourself entirely to Him, that you should live not for yourself, but for Him by fulfilling His commandments. Shun, therefore, everything that draws you into sin—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Crucify your flesh with its passions and lusts, and save your soul by patience. Love God and your neighbor as yourself.

* * *

What has the Master of our life done for us insignificant, ungrateful, and evil-disposed creatures? He came down from heaven, He assumed our flesh, worked many miracles. He suffered, shed all His blood, died, descended into hell, bound Satan, destroyed hell, freed the prisoners bound in hell, and brought them up to heaven. He rose from the dead in order to raise us also with Him. Let us fulfill His last will and testament—let us love one another. Let us be diligent in fulfilling His other commandments, and let us cease offending Him by our self-will and resistance. Lord, help us!

* * *

We must be one spirit with the Lord, the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of love, goodness, meekness, long-suffering, and mercy. He that has not this Spirit in him is not of God. Thus, I must be love, wholly love, "*That they all may be one*" (John 17:21). So be it! Lord, help me!

* * *

What will happen to us in the future life, when everything that has gratified us in this world—riches, honors, food, drink, dress, beautifully furnished dwellings, and all attractive objects—disappears, when all these things will seem to us no more than a dream, and when works of faith and virtue—abstinence, purity, meekness, humility, mercy, patience, obedience, and others—will be required of us?

* * *

We should have a living, spiritual union with the heavenly inhabitants, with the saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs, hierarchs, venerable and righteous ones, since we are all members of one single body, the Church of Christ, the living Head of which is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This is why we call upon them in prayer, converse with them, thank and praise them. All Christians must strive to be in union with them without procrastinating, if they desire to make Christian progress, for the saints are our friends, our guides to salvation who pray and intercede for us.

* * *

Trample the flesh and its passions under foot. Put the flesh and everything carnal on the same level as dirt, and do not care for it. Lord, Yours is the power. Help us! When we consider everything carnal and sinful as nothing, then the Lord will be everything for us. The Lord shall then reign over the ruins of earthliness in our hearts.

* * *

Through our attachment to the flesh, its lusts, and through setting an inordinately high value to the flesh and everything physical, the devil reigns in our hearts, fulfilling his will, antagonistic to God, driving God’s kingdom from our hearts, and destroying the work of Jesus Christ—our ascension into heaven. This is true! “*Despise the flesh, for it passeth away.*”[34] But in the present time, people of this world set a very high value on the flesh and earthly things, and no value at all to the spirit and spiritual things, such as faith and virtue.

* * *

The Lord does not dwell in a heart where greed and attachment to earthly benefits, pleasures, and money hold supreme. This is daily proved by experience. In such a heart dwell cruelty, pride, presumption, scorn, malice, vengeance, envy, avarice, vanity, boastfulness, theft, deceitfulness, hypocrisy, dishonesty, craftiness, flattery, obsequiousness, fornication, profanity, violence, treachery, and perjury.

* * *

We are all one through unanimity, love, and spiritual renewal, and the heavenly Father is everything to all of us. “Our Father, Who art in heaven.” We are one brotherhood with one spirit, and “*if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His*” (Rom 8:9). Let us understand this. We are the Church of Christ, and Christ Himself is our Head. He is meek and humble, inexhaustible in His mercies to us, if only we live in mutual love. We are the flock; He is the Shepherd. We are the members; He is the Head. How can the members be proud of anything, when they receive everything from the Head?

* * *

If we are in living, active union with the members of Christ here on earth, if we love them in deed and in truth, then God’s saints will be in living, active union with us, and whatever we ask of them, they will obtain it for us from Christ our God, for Whose sake they sacrificed all that was dear to them.

* * *

Do we who have received life from God, the Life of all, bring to Him as an offering our own life, the fruits of our life, as did our forefathers—the prophets, apostles, martyrs, hierarchs, venerable and righteous one, and all the saints? Do we even think of this on a daily basis? Do we not rather live only for ourselves? Do we live according to the commandments and ordinances of the Life Giver? If not, what prevents our doing so? Our self-love! Let us bring our self-love as a sacrifice of love to the Lord, for what are we? Nothing but sin and corruption.

* * *

Daily, the poor beg alms of you, and daily you should give willingly, without anger, harshness, or complaint. You do not give your own, but you give that which belongs to God, to God's children who bear a heavy cross and have scarcely where to lay their heads. You are only a steward of God's property; you are the everyday servant of the least of Christ's brethren; therefore, you must fulfill your duty meekly, humbly, and unwearyingly. You will thus be serving Christ, the Judge and Giver of Rewards—a great honor, a high calling! Do good works joyfully. Money comes to you easily, without great labor; therefore, you should distribute it easily, without thinking much about it. Your labors are generously rewarded; be generous to others. They are not rewarded according to their merit; do not give to others according to their merits, but for sake of their need.

* * *

In the same way that a passionate man is one spirit with the devil (this is something I and many others feel and experience), a virtuous man is and remains one spirit with the Lord, and this he feels and experiences, saying, "*it is not I who live, but Christ lives in me*" (Gal 2:20). The Lord himself has said, "*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him*" (John 6:56). And Apostle Paul said, "*Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?"* (2 Cor 13:5). Thus God's saints are one spirit with the Lord; likewise, all those who live piously on earth are one spirit with the Lord. This is a great mystery and a great honor for earthborn creatures. But, also, what shame and destruction it is to the sophists and the disobedient! They are one spirit with the devil, from whom, Christ our God, deliver us all!

* * *

If the truth of something has been revealed in the Word of God, if it has been studied and explained to us by the divinely enlightened minds of the fathers whom God has glorified, and if it has been recognized by the heart through its light and life-giving effect, then it is a great sin and diabolical pride of the intellect and heart to doubt and be perplexed about it.

* * *

I myself am every moment a debtor to the Lord, spiritually and bodily—spiritually through my sins and bodily through freely receiving His material gifts of food, drink, money, clothing, air, warmth, light, and all other comforts of life. How, then, can I not joyfully forgive my neighbor's debts, spiritual and material, when the Lord forgives me the countless multitude of my own debts? How can I not freely give away the gifts that belong to the Lord, when the Lord freely bestows upon me countless spiritual and material blessings—light of my mind and heart, peace and joy to my heart, a multitude of knowledge, and everything else, down to the very air I breathe? It would be monstrous to do otherwise. We are all one body and members of one another, and we are all dependent on each other, just as in society it is impossible to avoid being indebted to others, or others being indebted to us. It is impossible for us not to forgive each others' debts. In the body, some members naturally survive only on account of others. For instance, the stomach cannot function without the head, or the hands and feet. It is the same with people. The chief thing is to remember that we receive everything freely from God, that we are infinitely indebted to Him, and that He lovingly forgives us our trespasses, on the condition that we forgive those who trespass against us. Let us, therefore, willingly, from the bottom of our heart, forgive our neighbors their trespasses against us. Let us daily offer this sacrifice to God and live in love. Let us renounce self-will and the tumult of passions, and entirely submit to the will of God. We are the image of God, and "*God is love*" (1 John 4:8, 16). Let us, therefore, live in love; let us strive for love with all our might. Lord help us! But let us count everything earthly—food, dress, money—as garbage, and let us not anger God through our attachment to this garbage, or by harboring grudges or enmity against each other. Is it possible that we should sell our Lord for food, for money? One thing only—either God, or the flesh. We cannot worship two gods, we cannot serve two masters. The flesh dictates its own laws that entirely oppose the laws of God—the laws of gluttony, intemperance, trusting in food, drink, money, avarice, or begrudging God's gifts to our neighbor, anger to our neighbor, contempt for him, hard-heartedness toward his misfortunes, and so on. What must we do then, in order not to serve God hypocritically? We must crucify the flesh, with its passions and lusts, counting it as nothing, and everything that it values

much and loves—pleasures, dress, money, houses, carriages—we must also count as nothing, as garbage, corruption, dirt, as indeed they really are. Rather, acknowledge love to be the most precious thing in life, sacrifice everything to it, submit everything to it, and neglect everything for its sake.

* * *

Everyone must know and believe that there is a spiritual, deadly serpent, known as the devil or Satan, condemned by the Creator to everlasting torments, who can lead away into everlasting torment those who do not believe, those who are unrighteous and impenitent. Everyone must know and believe that the Saviour was sent from God into the world in order to save men from the deadly arrows of this serpent—sin and everlasting death—and that this Saviour bestows His saving, healing remedies on all to counter the bites of this serpent. These remedies are faith, penitence, and the Holy Mysteries of His Body and Blood.

* * *

There are many drops of rain, but all fall from a single cloud. There are many rays of the sun, but all stream from one sun. There are many leaves on a tree, but all grow on a single tree. There are many grains of sand on the earth, but they are all of the same dirt. There are also many people, but all of them are descended from the one Adam, and, most importantly, from God.

* * *

For what purpose does the Lord add day after day, year after year, to our existence? In order that we may gradually cast evil out of our souls and acquire blessed simplicity; in order that we may become gentle as lambs and simple as children; in order that we may learn not to have the least attachment to earthly things, but like loving, simple children, may cling with all our hearts to God alone and love Him with all our hearts, all our souls, all our strength, and all our thoughts, and love our neighbor as ourselves. Let us hasten, therefore, to pray to the Lord, fervently and tearfully, to grant us this simplicity of heart, and let us strive every way we can to cast out the evil from our souls—suspiciousness, wishing evil on

others, finding joy in others' misfortunes, anger, pride, arrogance, boastfulness, scorn, impatience, despondency, despair, irritability, faint-heartedness, envy, avarice, gluttony, overeating, fornication (both in thought and action), love of money, acquisitiveness, slothfulness, disobedience, the entire dark host of sins. O Lord, without You we can do nothing! Bless us Yourself in this work, and give us victory over our enemies and our passions. So be it!

* * *

Let us put away our spiritual near-sightedness, and let us stop concentrating all our attention on temporal, earthly things. Let us look with the eyes of our mind into the future, everlasting life, and let us lift up our hearts to contemplation of our heavenly homeland. Indeed, it is strangely near-sighted for the immortal soul only to contemplate present, visible things, relating to the senses and flattering our carnal nature, and not to contemplate the life of the world to come and the blessings which "*eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man,*" but which the Most-merciful and the Most-wise "*God has prepared for those who love Him*" (1 Cor 2:9). Of what do we not deprive ourselves through this voluntary near-sightedness! Like flies we adhere to earthly sweets and do not wish to lift up our hearts and to tear ourselves away from them. Blessed is he who despises the joys of this world; there shall be no end to his bliss.

* * *

As in everyday life there are poor and rich, so in the spiritual life there are poor and rich. In the world, the poor ask charity of the rich and well-to-do and cannot live without their help. It is the same in the spiritual life—the poor must have recourse to the spiritually rich. We are the spiritually poor, while the saints or those who shine even in this present life through their faith and piety are the spiritually rich. It is to them that we destitute ones must rush for help. We must beg for their prayers, so that they may help us to become as guileless as children, so that they may teach us how to become spiritually wise, how to conquer sins, how to love God and our neighbor. Therefore, pray for me, saints of God, you prophets, apostles, martyrs, hierarchs, venerable and righteous ones, that I may become like you!

* * *

When you pray to the Lord, vividly call Him to mind. You are praying to the unoriginate, infinite King of all creatures, to the All-holy, All-merciful, Almighty, Most-wise, Omnipresent, All-righteous God, Whom millions upon millions of angels of various orders revere, Whom the armies of martyrs, the companies of prophets and apostles, the assemblies of hierarchs, venerable and righteous ones praise. When you pray to the Holy Virgin, our Lady, also call to mind Her unprecedented holiness, Her greatness, mercy, wisdom, Her helpfulness to all, and the humble worship rendered to Her by the assemblies of angels and men.

* * *

We must constantly remember and strive to live in emulation of the mystery of our redemption by Christ, His sufferings, His death on the cross, His resurrection and ascension, and His second coming. Above all else, we must honor the holiness of the Mother of God as the living ark and temple of God, and we must ask Her, after the Lord Himself, for cleansing and holiness and steadfastness in faith and love.

* * *

Avoid flattery, impudence, and self-will. Our soul has a passion for these when others do something differently that how we would like, or do not do what we want. Be patient! Think how it would be if others revenged themselves upon you immediately after you had done something against their will, or after you had not done what you should have. "*As you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise*" (Luke 6:31). Keep to the following rule: We forgive our debtors. Man is debt incarnate. We must remember that our heart is extremely capricious, evil, and foolish. Sometimes, we take a violent dislike to a person without any cause or reason, and nourish malice in our heart against him, and are ready to offend him for no reasons whatsoever. We must despise both "natural" and purposeless malice in our heart, and instead we should pray to God to drive out of our heart this stench of the abyss of hell. Let us remember God's command: "*These things I command you, that you love one another*" (John 15:17).

* * *

The life of the heart is love, while malice and enmity against our brother are the heart's death. The Lord keeps us on the earth in order for love for God and neighbor to completely penetrate our heart. This is what He expects from us all. This is, indeed, the purpose of the world's continued existence.

* * *

My daily greatest misfortune is my sin, wounding and gnawing at my heart. But against this misfortune there is a great Deliverer, Jesus Christ, Who saves me daily. He daily, invisibly, generously heaps benefits on me. Poor sinners! Learn to know this Saviour as I know Him—through His grace, through His gifts.

* * *

You become angry with your neighbor, your brother, and you say, "He is such a miser, malicious, proud," or he has done this and that, and so on. What is that to you? He sins against God, not against you. God is his Judge, not you. He shall have to answer for himself before God, not to you. Know yourself, how sinful you are, what a beam you have in your own eye! Know how difficult it is for you to master your own sins, how afflicted you are by them, how they have ensnared you, how you wish for condescension from others toward your own infirmities. Your brother is a human being like you; therefore, you must be compassionate to him as to a sinful man, similar in everything to yourself, as infirm as you are. Love him as yourself, listening to the Lord's words, "*These things I command you, that you love one another*" (John 15:17). As you pray the Lord to help you root out your own cruel and incurable passions, you should also pray for your brother, that the Lord may free him from the flattery and corruption of his passions, from their darkness and oppression. We must remember that we are one sinful body, more or less infected by the "common enemy—the devil." By ourselves, without God's grace, we are powerless to free ourselves from His fatal and darkening attacks. Only the Holy Spirit can drive away the darkness of the passions, through the power of the Lord Jesus Christ's suffering on the cross. We must, therefore, humbly pray to the Lord, in the

spirit of brotherly love, for all our brothers and for all people, that they may escape from the darkness of the passions and their great seductiveness, in which they delight, not realizing their destructiveness. For example, the rich man rejoices in his wealth; the ambitious man gloats over his awards; the glutton finds pleasure in food, drink, and dainties; the malicious man enjoys his anger; the envious man glories in the sufferings of those he envies; and so on.

* * *

The Lord hears every word of the prayer "God, have mercy upon me," and He fulfills every word (this is from experience), if only we speak from the depths of our heart. In the same way, He hears and fulfills all the words of other prayers, even our own personal, sincere prayers. O Lord, Who so graciously hears us, glory to You! "*For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened*" (Matt 7:8). Only pray in the simplicity of your heart and without doubting.

* * *

By striking our body with sickness, the Lord crushes the old, sinful, carnal man, in order to give strength to the new man, whom we have weakened by the works of the flesh—gluttony, slothfulness, amusements, and manifold sinful attachments and passions. "*For when I am weak, then I am strong*" (2 Cor 12:10). Therefore, we must accept every malady with gratitude.

* * *

God's saints become great through their spiritual disposition, faith, firm trust in God, and burning love for God, for Whose sake they despised all earthly things. O, how insignificant we are compared to them; how unlike them! They are great through their great deeds of abstinence, vigilance, fasting, unceasing prayer, diligence in studying the Word of God, and pious contemplation. O, how unlike them we are! How deeply must we venerate them! With what reverence must we ask for their prayers for us! But in no case must we regard them lightly, irreverently, always remembering their deification, their union with the Divine.

* * *

I thank You, my Lord, Master, and Judge, for teaching me how to pray simply to You, for hearing my prayer, for saving me from my sins and sorrows, and for rightly directing my ways. I called upon You (in the sin of my wickedness) in the words of the church prayer, "O, Lord, our God, Who grantest forgiveness unto men through repentance …." And as soon as I finished this prayer, peace and lightness established themselves in my soul (June 29, 1864).

* * *

Do not listen to the enemy's slander against your neighbor, his abomination, his various wickedness, and his pride. Treat everybody simply, respectfully, as the image of God, and do not think any evil of another without reason.

* * *

When you are praying either inwardly only, or both inwardly and outwardly, be firmly convinced that the Lord is there, by you and within you, hearing every word, even if only said to yourself, even when you only pray mentally. Pray with your whole heart, sincerely, and judge yourself likewise truly, without in the least justifying yourself. Have faith that the Lord will have mercy on you, and you will not remain unforgiven. This is true. It is taken from experience.

* * *

You are angry with your neighbor, you despise him, you do not want to speak calmly and lovingly to him, because there is something harsh, abrupt, careless, unpleasant to you in his character, speech, manners, because he is more conscious of his dignity than perhaps is necessary, or because he may be somewhat proud and disrespectful. But you yourself, your neighbor's physician and teacher, are guiltier than he. "*Physician, heal yourself*" (Luke 4:23). Teacher, teach yourself. Your own vitriol is the bitterest of all evils. Is it then possible to correct another's anger by means of evil? Having a beam in your own eye, can you pull out the mote from the eye of another? Evil

and faults are corrected by virtue—love, kindness, meekness, humility, and patience. Acknowledge yourself as the greatest of sinners, who may only appear to you to be sinners or are sinners in reality; consider yourself worse and lower than all; cast out of yourself all pride and anger against your neighbor, all impatience and fury, and only then try to cure others. Until then, cover the sins of others with your compassionate love. What would happen if everyone were to notice all their neighbors' iniquities? Eternal animosity and discord, for who is without sin? Therefore, we are commanded to forgive all those who trespass against us, for if the Lord will be quick to mark our iniquities, who of us still stands before His justice? (Psalm 129:3). "*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you*" (Matt 6:4). We stand before the altar of love in the presence of Incarnate Love Himself, but we have no love for each other. How strange it is! And we do not even care about this. But love will not come of itself without our zeal, efforts, and activity.

* * *

O Lover of mankind, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, I thank You from the bottom of my heart for having heard my request to learn to love my neighbor and despise earthly things. Thank you for pouring into my heart peaceful, wise, and sweet love. Strengthen these in me, O God, through the prayers of Our Most-pure Lady, Your Mother, and may I be Your child, O Lord, and Her truest child.

* * *

O, how beautiful, how precious a creature is man! O, what a graceful and splendid palm-tree is man! Man is the highest of God's creatures! O, most honorable of God's creatures, that should, as the image of God, as the justly revered temple of God Himself, be untouched by anything impure! May all impure, evil, blasphemous, doubting thoughts flee from us. We are the children of God; we are holy in Christ. Let us keep and preserve our hearts in holiness, so that the hand of the impure and evil spirits may not in any way touch us, the living arks of God, or our thoughts and hearts! O Word of God and God, Who was incarnate for our sakes, preserve us in Your holiness! Our Most-holy Head! Deliver not our hearts and bodies to impure Satan, let him not sully them with evil thoughts, but ever dwell with us and

keep us pure and spotless. Grant, Lord, that, as members of Your Body, we may ever live in union with You, our Most-divine Head. May we be united with You in the thoughts of our hearts, in our prayers, and in our deeds. Our hearts' falling away from You is darkness and death, sorrow and constraint, shame, humiliation and spiritual abomination, while with You we find light, life, peace, joy, expansion of the heart, boldness, greatness, and holiness.

* * *

You know that eternal life in God is promised you, but you must earn it through obedience to God and His Church during this transitory life, through patience in sickness, sorrows, misfortunes, and various privations. And yet, you do not wish to obey the Creator, you live in carelessness and you neglect your souls and virtue, living in continual sin! What can you expect after this, O ungrateful, evil-natured, and disobedient creatures? My soul, think and direct all your earthly life to the glory of God and the good of your neighbor. Do not gratify flesh and blood, but seek to please your Lord, for flesh and blood are passing, like all earthly things.

* * *

Why be suspicious where there is no reason for it, as, for example, during reading and hearing the Word of God, or during reading and singing in church, during prayers, etc. God is truth, and that is enough; the Church is "*the pillar and ground of the truth*" (1 Tim 3:15). The devil is falsehood itself, the slanderer, the adversary—that is enough. Know the one God and His truth; shun the devil and his lies, delusions, and foolishness.

* * *

The demons tremble before the life-giving Cross, even the mere sign of the cross, because the Son of God was nailed to the wood of the cross, sanctifying it through His suffering. How do the demons tremble before our Lady, the Mother of God, and even at Her most-holy name! Our Lady is like the brightest star; She is awash in the Light of God, like a glowing coal in a large fire. She is all light and fire. As easy as it is to think that He, God, is Light and Holiness, so is She eternal light and holiness. Amen.

* * *

"*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*" (Heb 13:8), and the same can be said of God's truth—everything that is read in the Gospel, the Holy Scriptures, the Church prayers, the Canons, the Akathists, and the Psalms is the one same eternal truth. It is the same as when you first encountered it, or when you prayed with a fervent heart and felt its full power, sweetness, peace, and life-giving effect. You change constantly, as does your relationship with the truth, but the truth itself remains forever the same—the eternally enlightening, warming, and life-giving sun.

* * *

How long will it be before the Holy Mysteries of which we partake remind us that "*we, though many, are one bread and one body*" (1 Cor 10:17), and how much longer will there be no mutual heartfelt union among us members of the single body of Christ? How long shall we make up our own laws for life, warring against each other, envying each other, tormenting, grieving, irritating, judging, and abusing each other? When will the Spirit of Christ abide in us, the spirit of meekness, humility, kindness, unfeigned love, self-denial, patience, chastity, abstinence, simplicity, sincerity, contempt for the earthly, and whole-hearted striving toward the heavenly? O Lord Jesus Christ! Enlighten the eyes of our heart, and "*Thy good Spirit shall lead me into the land of righteousness*" (Psalm 142:10). Give us Thy Spirit!

The Lord is everything to everyone, for we cannot do anything by ourselves, for ourselves. He is the Giver of all powers, blessings, and everything necessary for our welfare. Let us lay all our sorrows, cares, and anxiety at the feet of the Lord.

* * *

During prayer, be like a child, uniting your spirit with the spirit of the prayer you are uttering. Count yourself as nothing and accept the prayer as a great gift of God. Renounce your own carnal mind-set and do not listen to it, for earthly "*knowledge puffs up*" (1 Cor 8:1). It doubts, imagines, blasphemes. If during prayer, or at any other time, the enemy hinders your soul with any kind of blasphemy or abominations, do not become

despondent as a result, but say firmly in your heart: It was for the cleansing from these and similar sins that our Lord Jesus Christ came to earth. It was to heal these and other similar infirmities of spirit that the Most Merciful came to help us. If you say these words with faith, your heart will be immediately at peace, for the Lord will cleanse your heart. In general, you must not fall into despondency as a result of any sin or evil thoughts, but trust in the Saviour. O, boundless mercy and compassion of God! O, great ministry of the God-Man to us sinners! And even until now, He serves us in His love for mankind, cleansing and saving us. Therefore, let the dominion of the enemy come to shame!

* * *

When you praise your pious neighbor, you praise God. When you do good to your neighbor, you benefit yourself, for we are all one body. When you do good to your neighbor, you make God your debtor, for your neighbor is the image of God, and God is everything for everyone. By doing good to a Christian, you make Christ, the Son of God, your debtor, for Christians are His body, His members. When you lend to a Christian, you lend to the Holy Spirit, for Christians are the temples of the Holy Spirit. "*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* (1 Cor 3:16).

* * *

God created man in His own image and likeness. This is an infinitely great gift, but man, a reasonable, free creature, became ungrateful to His Creator, offended Him through his falsehood and faithlessness, through his pride, for man wished to become equal to his Creator and went against Him. Every sin is war against God. But, O infinite gift of God's love to men! When we had fallen so low by sinning against the Creator, when we had fallen from life into death by turning away from God, our Life, when we had corrupted ourselves by sin, and when everlasting death threatened us, God sent the Redeemer of the World, His own Only-begotten Son, wrapped in human flesh, to suffer for our offenses and cleanse us from sins and bring us again to His Father, from Whom we had fallen away. Let us value this, God's greatest gift to us, and let us not "*neglect so great salvation!*" (Heb 2:3). Let us constantly remember our sinful corruption and the grace offered

by the Church for our regeneration. "*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature*" (2 Cor 5:17). Are we new, or do we remain old as before, with the same sins?

* * *

The Mother of God is one flesh and blood, one spirit with the Saviour, as His Mother. So infinitely great was Her virtue, by the grace of God, that She became the Mother of God Himself, giving Him most-pure and sacred flesh, nourishing Him with Her milk, carrying Him in Her arms, clothing Him, caring in every way for Him in His infancy, kissing Him over and over again, and caressing Him. O Lord, who can describe the greatness of the God-bearing Virgin? "*Every tongue is in doubt how to worthily praise Thee, even the angelic mind itself wonders how to hymn Thee, Mother of God.*"[35] We must call upon Her with a single thought, a simple movement of the heart. She is one with God, like the saints.

* * *

Know and remember that the matter of your salvation is always near to the heart of our Lady, the Mother of God. It was for this reason that the Son of God, with the good will of the Father and the cooperation of the Holy Spirit, chose Her out of all generations and was incarnate of Her in order to save the human race from the curse of sin and eternal death, or everlasting torments. In the same way as the matter of our salvation is near to the Saviour, it is near to Her heart. Turn to Her with full faith, trust, and love.

* * *

Christ, the Son of God, the Most-holy God, "*is not ashamed to call them brethren*" (Heb 2:11); therefore, do not at least be ashamed to call poor, obscure, simple people your brothers and sisters, whether they be your relatives or not. Do not be proud in your interaction with them, do not despise them, for we are all brothers in Christ. We were all born of water and the Spirit in the baptismal font and became children of God. We are all called Christians; we are all nourished with the Body and Blood of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world; the sacraments of the Church are celebrated over all of us; we all pray the Lord's prayer: "Our Father …,"

and all of us equally call God our Father. We know no other relationship other than the spiritual, highest, eternal relationship that was given to us by the Lord of our life, the Creator, the Renewal of our nature, Jesus Christ. This relationship is alone true, holy, lasting, while earthly relationships are untrue, changeable, inconstant, transitory, passing as our flesh and blood are passing. Therefore, be simple in your interaction with your fellow men, as an equal with equals, and do not exalt yourself above anyone. On the contrary, humble yourself. "*For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted*" (Luke 18:14). Do not say that you are educated and he or she is not, he or she is a simple uneducated peasant. The gift of God is given to you, an unworthy one. Do not turn it into an occasion for pride, but an occasion for humility, for "*everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more*" (Luke 12:48). Do not say that you are of noble birth, and he is of low birth. Earthly nobility, without the nobility of faith and virtue, is nothing but an empty name. What is there in my nobility, when I am as much a sinner as others, or perhaps even worse? And we must love our neighbor not in our way, but in God's way, that is, not according to our will, but according to the will of God. Our will is only to love those who love us, and to despise, hate, and persecute our enemies or those who displease us for whatever reason. But God desires that we should love our enemies still more, because they are sick. In this manner, we ourselves, being equally sick with self-love, scorn, and vitriol, should cure ourselves with love and humility, applying this same all-healing bandage to the wounds of their hearts. While curing the spiritual diseases of others, we must not in any way be arrogant or angry, nor become irritated and lose our temper, nor think of our own advantage instead of our neighbor's, serving our own self-love and passions. "Love is not provoked" by the thoughtless or arrogant behavior of our neighbor, "*love suffers long and is kind … [It] does not parade itself, is not puffed up … thinks no evil*" (1 Cor 13:4–5), does not take account of every word, but instead covers all wrongdoing. Yes, sometimes even that is enough, for whatever you cover through your compassion often passes away of itself. Therefore, he who strives to cure others must himself be in good health, so that he may not be told, "*Physician, heal yourself*" (Luke 4:23). If the person whom you strive to heal notices that you yourself are evil, angry, and do not love him, then he will inwardly despise and hate

you, and you will not produce any beneficial effect on him at all, for evil is not amended by evil, but only with good. "*Overcome evil with good*" (Rom 12:21). First root out in yourself that which you wish to root out in others.

* * *

Worldly cares obscure the mental horizon of our soul; like fog, they darken the eyes of our heart and bind the soul. But be worried about nothing, instead laying all your sorrows and anxieties at the feet of the Lord, according to the Spirit-bearing teaching of the Apostle Paul. Do not begrudge any expenses incurred for others; these are the pledge of new and greater gifts from the Lord to you.

* * *

Some seem to be praying to the Lord, but are in reality serving the devil, who conceals himself in their hearts, because they pray only with their mouths, while their hearts remain cold, unfeeling. They do not desire that which the mouth speaks, and are "*far from*" (Isa 29:13) the Lord. Likewise, there are many people who commune of the Body and Blood of Christ insincerely, without great love, but only with their mouths and bellies, weak in faith, cold, with hearts attached to food, drink, money, or inclined to pride, malice, envy, slothfulness, far from Him Who is all love, holiness, perfection, great wisdom, and unspeakable goodness. It is necessary for such people to go deeper into themselves, to repent more sincerely, and think profoundly of what prayer and Holy Communion truly are. Coldness of the heart toward God, toward prayer, is of the devil, for he is the coldness of hell. But let us, the children of God, love the Lord with a fiery love. Grant us, O our Lord, for without You we "*can do nothing*" (John 15:5). For You are everything to us, while we ourselves are nothing. You have brought us from nonexistence into being, and You have provided us with everything.

* * *

To repent means to feel in our hearts the falsehood, madness, guilt of our sins. It means to acknowledge that we have offended our Creator, Lord, Father, and Benefactor, Who is infinitely holy and infinitely abhors sin. It means to desire, with the whole soul, to amend and to expiate our sins.

* * *

Remind the Christian who has sinned voluntarily or involuntarily more frequently of his dignity, that he has been deified, and that our nature is placed upon the throne with God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Tell the Jew, Muslim, or pagan (at a fitting occasion) of what they deprive themselves by lingering in unbelief; tell them how our nature has been raised, ennobled, filled with grace by the Son of God. Exhort Christians to give up sinning for the sake of this nobility of nature, and draw unbelievers to the faith of Christ.

* * *

According to the great litany,[36] we are all one. In the litany, all the members of the Church, the body of Christ, are listed—first the earthly members, then the heavenly. This is the character of all the divine services of the Orthodox Church—Vespers, Matins, Liturgy. With what spirit, with what elevation of thought, with what love must the priest pray to God "*in behalf of all, and for all.*"[37]

* * *

In the prayers and hymns of the Church, through the entire space they comprise, the Spirit of Truth moves. Everything contradictory and blasphemous that comes into the mind is from without, from the devil, the father of lies, the slanderer. All prayers and psalms are the breath of the Holy Spirit.

* * *

He who prays to the Lord, to His Mother, to the angels and saints, must first of all endeavor to change his heart and his life, and afterward to imitate Them, as it is written, "*Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful*" (Luke 6:36). "*Be holy, for I am holy*" (1 Pet 1:16). Those who pray to the Mother of God must imitate Her humility, Her unimaginable purity, Her submission to the will of God (for example, when you witness injustice), and Her patience. Those who pray to the angels must think of the higher life and strive to live spiritually, gradually laying aside all

attachment to the world and carnal passions, striving also to acquire ardent love for God and their neighbor. Let those who pray to the saints imitate their love for God, their contempt of the world and its vain benefits, their prayers, abstinence, nonacquisitiveness, patience in sickness, sorrows, and misfortunes, their love for their neighbor. Otherwise, one's prayers will be as useless as beating the air.

* * *

One must ardently desire, one must hunger like a starving man for blessings asked in prayer, especially spiritual ones—forgiveness of sins, cleansing, sanctification, strengthening in virtue; otherwise, your prayer will be a useless waste of words. The same applies to thanking and praising the Lord. Hunger and thirst to constantly thank and praise the Lord, for everything comes from Him, everything is the gift of His goodness and mercy.

* * *

The Lord is my existence. The Lord is my deliverance from everlasting death. The Lord is my eternal life. The Lord is my cleansing and deliverance from a multitude of iniquities and my sanctification. The Lord is strength in my weakness, freedom in my constraint, trust in my faint-heartedness and despondency. The Lord is a life-giving fire in my coldness. The Lord is light in my darkness, comfort in my confusion. The Lord is my intercessor in temptation. He is my thinking, my desire, my activity. He is the light of my soul and body; my food, drink, and clothing; my shield, my weapons. The Lord is everything to me. O my soul, love and thank the Lord constantly! "*Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy Name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits; Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all they diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from corruptions, and crowneth thee with mercy and compassion; Who satisfieth thy desire with good things*" (Psalm 102:1–5).

* * *

"*You are all brethren*" (Matt 23:8). "*Love one another*" (John 15:17). The Church is like a great, holy family of God, in which God Himself is the

Father; the Most-holy Virgin, the Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ is our Mother; the angels and saints are our elder brothers; and all of us are younger brothers, born of the same mother and begotten of the Church in the baptismal font by the Holy Spirit. The younger brothers are naturally obliged to respect the elder; they are naturally subordinate to them, and being not yet perfect, they ask the elder brothers to pray to God for them, since they are God's friends, whose intercession is favorably received by the Lord. All of us, children of the Heavenly Father, pray to Him in the words given by His Son: "Our Father …."

* * *

Lord! You came to save us through faith in You. Behold, I truly believe that You are my Saviour, save me! You came to renew my nature, corrupted by sin. Renew me, who have corrupted myself with passions and carnal desires, renew me, both spiritually and bodily, so that I may be pure in heart and strong in body for the glory of Your Name. You came to deliver us from the works of the enemy. Deliver me from the works of the most evil, impure, and abominable enemy, warring in my members and inclining me, drawing me forcibly to sin. You came to enlighten us. Enlighten my heart, darkened by passions. You came to gather together that which was scattered. Gather together my thoughts, scattered by the enemy. You came to strengthen us in our weakness, saying, "For My strength is made perfect in weakness," and Your apostle says, "*Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me*" (2 Cor 12:9). Behold, I am most infirm, and without You can do no good thing; without You I cannot think or feel anything good, I cannot wish, speak, or do anything good. I am completely powerless for any good without You; therefore, bestow Your grace on me, give me light and strength to think and feel and accomplish all virtue, and to easily speak and do that which shall please You. Behold, I commit all my life to You, Christ my God, my Saviour, my Renewal, cleanse, sanctify, and save me. "*Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me*" (Psalm 50:12). Help me, for without You, my destruction is near and imminent.

* * *

In their malice toward us, in their craftiness against us, and in their various offenses against us, people are worthy of our exceptional pity and love, since they are sick and perishing, and have become the tools of our most wicked enemy, the devil, who teaches us every evil, and who seeks, through other people, to inflict misery and misfortune on us. But these afflictions and misfortunes are very, very advantageous for us, for they reveal to us the wounds of our heart, which we had not seen or felt before.

* * *

When confusion or some kind of powerlessness of the heart prevents your pronouncing the words of prayer during divine services, then consider such disturbance and weakness as a delusion of the enemy. Cast aside your despondency, faint-heartedness, and timidity, and for the sake of the Lord's name pray slowly, calmly, and intentionally louder. You will thus overcome your confusion and weakness, and you will obtain courage and strength. Everything is possible for those who believe and trust. We must fight and conquer.

* * *

Love your neighbor as yourself; for when you love your neighbor, you love yourself. But if you hate your neighbor, you harm yourself first of all, and you hate your own soul. You know this from experience. O, most-wise, creative, and life-giving commandments of the Lord! How good it is to fulfill them, although the enticement of sin makes their fulfillment difficult. How blessed is the Lord's yoke for the soul, and how light the burden of His commandments!

* * *

If you have Christian love for your neighbor, then all heaven will love you. If you have union of spirit with your fellow creatures, then you shall have union with God and all the dwellers of heaven. If you are merciful to your neighbor, then God and all the angels and saints will be merciful to you. If you pray for others, then all heaven will intercede for you. The Lord our God is holy, be holy yourself also!

* * *

You earth-born creatures, who are not pure, rejoice in the fact that the Most-holy Virgin Mary, the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, has entirely and superabundantly attained the purity of soul and body unattainable to you. Rejoice in this and pray to Her, that She may teach you and your children to pass your lives in purity in this corrupt world, so full of temptations. It is because of Her purity, humility, and virtues, because She was found worthy of becoming the Mother of God the Word, that we offer gratitude to the Heavenly Father during the offering of the Bloodless Sacrifice, saying, "*Especially to the Most Holy … Glorious Lady, the Mother of God ….*"[38] We offer Her our service of prayer, glory, and thanksgiving.

* * *

How corrupt have I become through sin! Everything noxious, evil, impure immediately enters into my thoughts and is felt in my heart, while anything good, right, pure, holy is often only thought and spoken of, but not felt in the heart. Woe is me! For evil is still dearer to my heart than good. Beside this, we are immediately ready to do evil as soon as it is thought of or felt, and we do it quickly and easily if we have no fear of God, while "*how to perform what is good I do not find*" (Rom 7:18) the power within me, and the intended good work is often put off indefinitely.

* * *

Pray for others as you would pray for yourself, for we are all the children of the Heavenly Father.

* * *

In prayer of supplication, the most important factors are faith in God; a sincere, firm desire for those blessings for which we ask; and a disinclination or aversion to those sins which we confess. But it often happens that we desire with the tongue and thought, while the heart remains insensible. It is as though our tongue had an aversion to the sins, but not our heart, and we continue to linger in the same sins from which we daily pray

to be delivered. Therefore, the prophecy of Isaiah—"*These people draw near with their mouths, And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me*" (Isa 29:13)—is fulfilled in us.

* * *

When your heart inclines to thoughts of fornication, impurity, evil, or blasphemy; or when thoughts of malice, envy, avarice, covetousness, or gluttony darken, wound, and oppress you; then say to yourself with firm, heartfelt conviction that all this is a delusion of the devil, and all such ideas and thoughts shall immediately vanish. Blessed is he that "*speaketh the truth in his heart*" (Psalm 14:2). Tortured will be the one who imagines or thinks of evil and sin in his heart! "*Tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil*" (Rom 2:9). Despise the carnal delight of sin, for it is a provocation of the perishable flesh. When a thought of doubt in the truth comes to you, say to yourself that this thought is a delusion, but the truth remains eternally truth.

* * *

What am I? On the one hand, I am sin, an abyss of sin, all opposition to my God, the Creator and Accomplisher of all things, deserving of every condemnation and torment. On the other hand, I am complete want of virtue, iniquity instead of virtue. This is how far I have fallen and become corrupt and powerless. Without my Saviour, I can do nothing, as He Himself said, and I have come to know through much experience. He created me, soul and body; He raised me; He formed my talents; He continues to accomplish everything that is good within me, if I do anything good, but by myself, I am totally evil. But, O my Creator and Redeemer, You have created me; I am Your creature, Your servant. Direct me and fulfill Your will through me. Grant me Your grace, that I may entirely subdue my will to Yours, for I cannot do this without Your grace. Pasture me, O my shepherd. Save me, O my Saviour. Enlighten me, O my light. Strengthen me, O my strength!

* * *

"*What fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness, and what communion has light with darkness?"* (2 Cor 6:14). None at all. "*The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord*" (Prov 15:26), and the Lord withdraws from the heart in which such thoughts reside. This we feel in our own experience. Therefore, for the Lord to unite Himself with anybody, it is necessary that he should be perfectly free of the impurity of sin, and be adorned with virtues. This person should believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, Who took upon Himself the sins of the whole world, and he should acknowledge his sins, condemning them sincerely, considering them to be foolish. He should ask with his whole heart to be forgiven, firmly intending not to sin again in the future. It was in this manner that all the saints were united with the Lord and became holy. How holy therefore must be our Lady, the Mother of God, with Whom God the Word Himself, the Light everlasting, was most truly united: "*the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world*" (John 1:9), "*the Holy Spirit will come upon you*," and "*the power of the Highest will overshadow you*" (Luke 1:35). How holy and most holy must be our Lady, the Mother of the Lord, Who became the temple of God not made with hands, and was completely filled, in all Her thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds, by the Holy Spirit, and from Whose blood the Creator Himself created a body for Himself? Truly, She is Most Holy, firm, steadfast, immovable, unchangeable for all eternity in Her most-exalted, divine holiness, for the all-perfect God, Who became Her Son in the flesh, made Her perfect by reason of Her incredible humility; Her love of purity and God, the source of purity; Her entire renunciation of the world; and Her total attachment, in all Her thoughts, to the Heavenly Kingdom. She was made perfect especially because She became His Mother, carried Him in Her womb and Her most-pure arms, nourished with Her most-pure milk Him Who feeds all creatures, cared for Him, caressed Him, suffered and sorrowed for Him, lived Her whole life for Him, for Him alone was completely immersed in His Spirit, being one heart, one soul with Him, one holiness with Him! O most exalted unity of love and holiness of the most-pure Virgin Mary and Her Divine Son, the Lord Jesus Christ! Wonderful, too, are God's saints by their total love for the Lord, by the streams of blood and sweat they poured out for love of the Lord.

* * *

O infinitely great Benefactor, my Saviour! When I call to mind the infinite corruption of my nature through my many sins and passions, my spirit becomes despondent and downcast, but as soon as I remember You, that You came to renew my nature, corrupted by sin, and to bestow on my dishonor, my shame, the nobility of the angels and even a higher nobility than that of the angels, the nobility of the Son of God Himself, through faith in You, through regeneration by water and the Spirit, and through the communion of Thy Holy Mysteries, then my spirit immediately rises up from its despondency, shakes off the dishonor of the passions, and is completely filled with gratitude to You. Glory to Thee, O infinite mercy and power, Son of God!

* * *

Do not grow despondent, O sinners like me, but rather believe in the Son of God. Sinners, respect one another and do not despise anyone, for we are all sinners, and the Son of God came to save, cleanse, and raise us all to heaven.

* * *

“We forgive them that trespass against us.” This means we should not harbor any irritation, enmity, or anger against anyone who has been guilty toward us (intentionally or not). Instead, we should forgive him his offenses in all simplicity of heart, vividly calling to mind our own infirmities and fallings into sin, and maintaining toward our guilty neighbor the same love and the same gentleness that we felt before his sin. What if the Lord were to notice our iniquities as we do the faults of our neighbors? Who could withstand Him? But since the Lord is long-suffering and merciful, we must also be long-suffering and merciful (not exacting, but compassionate). “*Love suffers long and is kind*” (1 Cor 13:4). Do not count up the faults of your neighbor, but consider them as though they were insignificant, as nothing! We are one body, and this body is sinful. What is more universal and easy for us than sinning? We breathe sins like air. But the Lord, the Head of the body of the Church, is the cleansing of our sins. Leave everything to the Head, Who accomplishes all things in everyone. Hold fast to love alone, for it is the only infallible thing in our life (pure love). Do not serve the devil with the spirit of enmity, malice, hatred; do not increase evil

with evil, and do not spread the dominion of the enemy in the kingdom of Christ. "*Overcome evil with good*" (Rom 12:21). For you cannot conquer evil with evil, just as you cannot put out fire with fire, but only with water. Malice is always a delusion of the devil. Love is always God's truth and God's child.

* * *

Attachment to earthly and carnal things at the cost of forgetting God and the soul is of the devil, who, through attachments to earthly things, makes our heart coarse, earthly, a shameful vessel of passions. Instead, our heart should contemplate heavenly, spiritual realities; it should become the temple of the Holy Ghost. "*You cannot serve God and mammon*" (Matt 6:24). You cannot serve God and riches, God and the flesh, God and the world, God and earthly delights; therefore, you must rule over your flesh and your heart, for this is the science of sciences, the art of arts. I am sometimes flesh, and sometimes spirit. O inconstancy! O ingratitude! O slothfulness! O long-suffering of God! For how long shall I change like the moon, or like a kaleidoscope? Lord, establish me on the rock of Thy commandments!

* * *

The crucified flesh makes peace with the spirit and with God, but the pampered flesh, abundantly and daintily fed, fights hard against the spirit and God, becoming wholly an abomination of sin. It does not want to pray, and rebels against God (through blasphemy, for instance) and estranges itself from God. This I know from experience. Therefore, "*those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*" (Gal 5:24).

* * *

Christ "*came to earth in order to raise us up to heaven.*"[39] Do we aspire to the realization of the purpose of our beloved Saviour's coming to earth? Do we meditate upon heavenly things? Do we long for the heavenly kingdom? Let us ask ourselves these questions and answer them more frequently. Do we sufficiently value the Saviour's teaching and ministry,

His suffering and death? Do we not trample upon the entire economy of His salvation by clinging to the earthly instead of the heavenly? Yes, O Lord!

* * *

You alone know the cares, labors, and sweat of Your saints, undertaken willingly for purification and to please You, the Father of all. You alone know Your saints. Teach us to imitate them in our lives, so that we too may be united with all in love.

* * *

Why do the children of this world often scoff at that which is truth, light, sweetness, our life? I have in mind the divine service of the Church, the readings and singing in Church, or even the saints, glorified by You. "*These speak evil of whatever they do not know*" (Jude 1:10). "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*" (Luke 23:34), and enlighten them!

* * *

Love without calculation. Love is simple. Love never makes mistakes. Likewise, believe and trust without calculation, for faith and trust are also simple. Even better: God, in whom we believe and in whom we trust, is a simple Being, as He is simply Love. Amen.

* * *

Why do we read the Akathist to Jesus Christ and to the Mother of God? In order to enter into the spirit of the Lord and that of His most-pure Mother, and in order to recognize the greatness of the gift that was revealed in Christ's incarnation and our redemption, in the gift of His Body and Blood in the Holy Mysteries, and so that we may worthily receive this gift.

* * *

The Lord is so holy, so simple in His holiness, that one single evil or impure thought deprives us of Him and His sweetest and purest peace and light in our souls. Hence, it follows that the saints are all light. They are all

one sweet-smelling fragrance. They are like the light of the sun, like the purest air. Lord, grant this simple holiness to me also!

* * *

The Lord, before His incarnation, allowed mankind to experience all the bitterness of sin and complete powerlessness to eradicate it. Finally, when all longed for a Deliverer, then He appeared, the Most-wise, All-powerful Physician and Helper. When men hungered and thirsted after righteousness, as it grew weaker, then the everlasting righteousness came.

* * *

There is only one name for all the multifarious snares of the enemy—the devil. My soul, be assured of this, but do not be fainthearted, do not despair during the misfortunes caused by the enemy and in the storms hurled at you by the enemy.

* * *

"*Thine is the power.*"[40] In other words, You hold everything and everyone in Your power and under Your authority, even the spirits of evil. "Thine is the kingdom." You are King over all, even over the spirits of evil. "Thine is the strength." You uphold everyone through Your power. "Thine is the glory," for You have created everything for Your glory.

* * *

God is everything good to us, but the devil is every evil, every sinful abomination. A simple heart, taught by God, knows how to unite itself to God and how to avoid every connection with the devil.

* * *

It is sometimes necessary to ask a person who prays for himself or for others the following question in order to rouse his slumbering heart and conscience: "Are you in need of that for which you are asking, and do you

really desire to obtain it? Do you sincerely desire, for instance, amendment and holiness of life for yourself and others?”

* * *

There is only one God of my heart, my Lord and my God, and He is everything to me, as He is also everything to the whole world, visible and invisible, which was created by Him from nothing. Therefore, I should not cling to anything but my God; I should put aside everything that I have without regret, since it is no more than the dust that we trample underfoot. I should only have love for God in my heart, love for my brothers who are partakers of the divine nature in Christ. “*You may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust*” (2 Pet 1:4). “*Now we are children of God*” (1 John 3:2). And may no malice, that child of the devil, nor pride, self-exaltation, nor envy touch our hearts even for a single moment!

* * *

It is a remarkable phenomenon in nature that if you put a plant into a large, wide pot or tub, it grows very much at the roots. They thicken and branch out, but the plant itself does not grow much in height, and only produces a few small leaves and flowers. However, if it is planted in a small pot, then the roots are small, but the plant itself grows rapidly in height and produces beautiful leaves and flowers (if it is a plant that grows flowers). Is it not the same with man? When he lives in complete freedom, abundance, and prosperity, he grows in body, but he does not grow in spirit, producing no fruits of virtue. However, when he lives in constraint, poverty, sickness, misfortune, and afflictions, in a word, when his animal nature is crushed, then he grows spiritually, bearing flowers and ripe fruits of virtue. This is why the path of those who love God is a narrow one.

* * *

We all, without distinction of station—whether rich or poor, exalted or lowly, educated or uneducated—are one body, and we must love one another, therefore, as we love ourselves. “*We, though many, are … one body*” (1 Cor 10:17). “*Love one another*” (John 15:17), commanded the

Lord. We must crucify and despise our self-loving, proud, scornful, evil, darkened, deadened, rebellious, passionate heart, which violently opposes our living by the Lord's commandments in our everyday life. In our worldly relations with our neighbors, we must also renounce our self-will, instead following the will of God in all things.

* * *

Our passionate heart loves pleasures and calm, and it cannot endure bitterness and afflictions, and it does not like it if anyone disturbs us, for instance, with a request to do something for him. But the Lord commanded us to renounce the sinful rest of the flesh and to be the servants of all. He Himself showed us an example, for He knew no rest on earth during His ministry for our salvation. The apostles were also an example of this, especially the Apostle Paul.

* * *

Our heart often sleeps during prayer; the outer man prays, but not the inner man. We often only flatter ourselves with our tongue during prayer.

* * *

Having put on Christ by faith and by the Communion of the Holy Mysteries, I become firm and steadfast as a rock. Christ is the fullness of all blessings to me, and, above all, He is sweetest life and the peace "*which surpasses all understanding*" (Phil 4:7).

* * *

My flesh flourishes, but my soul fades. My flesh has free rein, but my soul is constrained. My flesh is satiated, but my soul hungers. My flesh is adorned, but my soul is filthy. My flesh smells sweetly, but my soul stinks. My flesh overflows with laughter, but my soul is surrounded by calamity. My flesh is in light, but my soul is in darkness—the darkness of hell. Today's false wisdom estranges us from the "*true Light which gives lights to every man coming into the world*" (John 1:9), and does not approach Him. But without Christ, all knowledge is vanity.

* * *

Our old man and the works of the devil are constantly present with us, acting fatally within us. This is why we occupy ourselves from the ambo[41] with this old man and his works, so that all who hear us may come to know themselves and the enticement of the passions. With the help of God's grace, they may come to slay the old man within them. We do not occupy ourselves with the news of this world, since it does not concern us. Thus, we teach all to know God, to love Him with the whole heart, and to love their neighbor as themselves. Since self-love is incompatible with love for God and neighbor, we teach all people, according to the commandments of the Saviour, to renounce themselves and to crucify the flesh with its passions and lusts. This is an ancient subject for sermons, but it can also become a new one, depending on how it is presented, whether the preacher directs it against the human passions and lusts of the present day, or whether he speaks generally, without going into specifics, of the necessity of crucifying the old man.

* * *

Blasphemy against the sacred and carnal thoughts come from the devil. When this stink from the abyss of hell disturbs and suffocates you, be assured, believe sincerely, that it is the work of the devil, and this abomination will immediately leave you. May the Lord enlighten and strengthen us!

* * *

The history of the election and the rejection of the Hebrews shows the truth that God shall exalt and honor those who are faithful to Him, but He shall abase and reject the ungrateful. It also demonstrates that He is faithful in His promises and threats.

* * *

Could not He Who has adorned the heavens with stars still more beautifully adorn His noetic Heaven, the most-pure Virgin, His Mother? Could not He Who has adorned the earth with various, many-colored, and

sweet-smelling flowers adorn His earthly Mother with all the many flowers of virtues, making Her sweet-smelling with spiritual fragrance? Truly He could. Our Lady has become Heaven and the Temple of God adorned with all blessings, more fragrant than all earthly aromas. O, if only God in His mercy, through the prayers of His most-pure Mother, would adorn me, disfigured by sin! If only He would make me, the unclean, fragrant! "*For with God nothing will be impossible*" (Luke 1:37). "*Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow*" (Isa 1:18).

* * *

Adam became so proud that he wished to become God and died for his pride; the Son of God humbled Himself, even unto death, and gave life to the fallen. O abyss of humility! Adam and Eve destroyed themselves through eating, the Lord fasted and died for them, in order to give them life. They were disobedient; Christ fulfilled His obedience.

* * *

"*Having seen a strange birth (of Christ), let us shun this vain world and set our minds upon godly things. God came down from heaven in order to raise us up to heaven,*"[42] but the devil and the flesh drag us down to earth. Christ calls and draws us to life eternal, but the devil allures us with this temporal life and attaches us to temporal things, concealing the eternal in darkness, or making men disbelieve in eternal life. Observe his snares, and do not be allured by the earthly life.

* * *

Man, in his present state, is wholly permeated with pride, wickedness, unbelief, doubt, weak faith, disobedience, heedlessness, malice, fornication, envy, covetousness, avarice, slothfulness, cowardice, despondency, theft, falsehood, and blasphemy. What a great labor lies before every Christian to cleanse himself from the impurity and corruption of the passions!

* * *

The devil generally enters into us through a single false thought or a single, sinful desire of the flesh, and then he begins to work within us and disturbs us. This is how simple he is. Cannot, therefore, the Lord of all spirits enter into us through a single thought, through true and holy love, and abide with us and be everything to us? Therefore, pray without any doubt, that is, simply, in the simplicity of your heart. It should be as easy to pray as it is to think.

* * *

Leave all human injustice to the Lord, for God is the Judge. As for yourself, be diligent to love everybody with a pure heart, and remember that you yourself are a great sinner in need of God's mercy. But in order to deserve God's mercy, we must forgive others in every way. So be it! So be it! The Lord is everything to everyone. He is the Judge as well as the generous Giver of gifts, mercy, and cleansing from sins, and He is the light, peace, joy, and strength of the heart.

* * *

Grant, Lord, that I may ever love each of my neighbors as myself, and not be angry with them for any reasons, and never to serve the devil in this way. Grant that I may crucify my self-love, pride, covetousness, disbelief, and other passions. Let us be known for our love for all; grant that we may believe and trust that the Lord is everything to us all. Grant that we may not be worried or anxious for anything, that You, our God, may truly be the sole God of our heart, nothing else beside You. Let there be union of love among us as there should be, and let everything that divides us and prevents us from loving one another, be despised by us, like the dust trampled underfoot. So be it! So be it! If God has given us Himself, if He abides in us and we in Him as He Himself said, then what will He not give us, what will He spare for us, of what will He deprive us, how can He forsake us? "*The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing*" (Psalm 22:1). "*Shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"* (Rom 8:32). Therefore, my soul, be calm and know nothing but love. "*These things I command you, that you love one another*" (John 15:17).

NOTES

1. In the Russian, it is clear that St John is making the point that the root of the word “vdokhnovenie” (inspiration) is “vdokh,” meaning “breathing in.” The English “inspiration” has the same connotation.
2. Exclamation taken from the Vespers.
3. From Metropolitan Philaret’s Catechism.
4. Ode 5.
5. A Russian proverb referring to the large Russian stoves that occasionally had to be swept clean of soot.
6. In pre-Revolutionary Russia, any person who had civil or military employment had to commune once a year by law.
7. The bread prepared for sacrament is called “The Lamb” in the Orthodox Eastern Church (Isa 53:7).
8. The Eucharist.
9. Akathist to the Mother of God, Kontakion 9.
10. According to Orthodox tradition, Jesus sent this icon, which was a perfect image of His face on a towel, to King Abgar of Edessa.
11. Kontakion at Matins on Holy Tuesday.
12. From the *Te Deum Laudamus.*
13. From the Troparia to the Holy Trinity in the morning prayers.
14. Speaking of a priest.
15. Taken from the invocation of the Holy Spirit at the Holy Liturgy.
16. Troparion from the burial service.
17. From the prayer said by the priest during the Liturgy before the Gospel.
18. Sunday Matins Antiphon, Tone 6.
19. From the Great Doxology at Matins.
20. Russian steam rooms, in this case “communal bath houses” popular in the big cities.

21. From the morning prayer of St Basil the Great.
22. From the prayer to the Most-holy Mother of God at compline.
23. Canon of the Fifth Tone.
24. Troparion for the burial service.
25. Prayer of Hannah, the mother of Samuel (1 Sam 1:15).
26. From the burial service of a priest.
27. Prayer of St John Chrysostom, from the evening prayers of the Russian Church.
28. Canon of the Archangel (Ode 3, Troparion 3).
29. Canon to the Guardian Angel (Ode 3 on the "both now").
30. From *The Divine Liturgy of Our Father Among the Saints John Chrysostom: Slavonic-English Parallel Text*, 3rd edition (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2013, p. 75).
31. St Spiridon was born at Cyprus and, although of humble origin, was unanimously chosen Bishop of Tremithus on account of the holiness of his life. He was gifted with the power of working miracles and was among the bishops who took part in the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea, convoked to refute the heresy of Arius. He died in 348.
32. Canon to the Guardian Angel, Ode 9.
33. From the Office of Confession, the words of the confessor to his spiritual child.
34. General Troparion to a Venerable Father (monastic).
35. Ninth Eirmos of the Canon for Theophany.
36. The great litany is a long series of petitions on behalf of the assembled in the Church and all the faithful that usually begins any major service.
37. Prayer at the Liturgy during the oblation.
38. From the Divine Liturgy.
39. From the Akathist to the Sweetest Jesus.
40. Taken from one of the priestly exclamations at Divine Liturgy.
41. The raised platform coming out from the altar toward the center of the church, from which the priest reads his sermon.
42. From the Akathist to the Sweetest Jesus.

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The Spiritual Journals of

St John of Kronstadt

My Life In Christ

Part II

My Life In Christ

The Spiritual Journals
of
St John of Kronstadt

(Archpriest Ivan Ilyich Sergiev)

Part 2

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Preface

I do not precede my book with any introduction: let it speak for itself. Everything contained in it is nothing less than the inspiration of grace within my soul, bestowed by the all-enlightening Holy Spirit during moments of deep attentiveness and self-examination, and especially during prayer. When I had time, I wrote down the grace-filled thoughts and feelings that came to me, and from these notes, continued for many years, this book has now been compiled; the contents are quite varied, as will be seen by the readers. Let them judge for themselves.

But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one (1 Cor 2:15).

Archpriest Ivan Sergiev

PART 2

My Life In Christ

And this is eternal life, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (John 17:3).

MAY the living water of the Holy Ghost fill my heart, and may rivers of living water flow from my heart to the glory of God, and for the salvation of God's people.

To the Glory of the Triune God. Amen.

Lord! I am a miracle of Your goodness, wisdom, and omnipotence, inasmuch as I was brought by You from nonexistence into existence; inasmuch as I am preserved until now by You in this existence; inasmuch as through the mercy, bounties, and love for mankind of Your Only-begotten Son, I shall inherit eternal life, provided I am faithful to You; inasmuch as by the mysterious act of offering Yourself through Your Son as a sacrifice, I am restored from the terrible fall, I am redeemed from eternal destruction. I glorify Your goodness, Your infinite power, Your wisdom! Complete the miracle of Your goodness, omnipotence, and wisdom in me, a miserable sinner, and by ways known only to You, save me, Your unworthy servant, and lead me into Your eternal kingdom, make me worthy of the life that never grows old, of the day that has no evening.

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My heart should cling to God alone. "*It is good for me to cleave unto God*" (Psalm 72:28), but—what blindness and perversion—my heart clings to earthly delights—to food, drink, carnal pleasures, money, dress, perishable colors, patterns, fashions that charm the eyes, luxuriously furnished rooms, etc. How strange it is! I, a Christian, a citizen of heaven, am occupied with everything earthly, and care but little for heavenly things. Through Christ, I have been relocated into heaven, but instead I cling with all my heart to earth, and to all appearances never desire to be in heaven, but would rather always remain on earth, even though earthly things, notwithstanding their delights, oppress and torment me. I see that

everything earthly is uncertain, corruptible, and soon passes away; I know and feel that nothing earthly can satisfy my spirit, appease and give joy to my heart, which is constantly disturbed and grieved by earthly vanity. How long shall I, a citizen of heaven, remain earthly? How long shall I, a child of God, born in holy baptism, "*not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God*" (John 1:13), remain flesh? How long will it be before I strive with my whole being to God? Lord! Draw my heart to You through Your Holy Spirit. Lord! Turn my heart away from earthly vanities. Lord! Without You I can do nothing.

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We love everything on earth that glistens—gold, silver, precious stones, crystal, bright clothing. Why then do we not love the future glory to which the Lord calls us? Why do we not aspire to shine like the sun? "*Then the righteousness will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*" (Matt 13:43). It is because we have perverted the nature of our soul by sin, and have attached ourselves to earth instead of to heaven, to corruptible things instead of to incorruptible ones. It is because we love earthly, transitory, perishable, and seductive splendor. But why do we love everything glistening? Because our soul was created for heavenly light, and it was originally all light, all radiance; thus, light is innate in us, the feeling and desire for light is innate in our soul. Direct this aspiration to seeking the heavenly light!

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When you see a beautiful girl or a handsome youth, immediately raise your thoughts to the supreme, most-holy beauty, the author of every earthly and heavenly beauty—God. Glorify Him for having created such beauty out of mere dirt; marvel at the beauty of God's image in man that shines forth even in our perverted state; imagine what our image will be when we shall shine forth in the kingdom of our Father (if we become worthy of it); picture to yourself what must be the beauty of God's saints, the holy angels, the Mother of God Herself, adorned with the Divine glory; imagine the unspeakable goodness of God's face, which we shall behold, and do not be allured by earthly beauty, by flesh and blood. Carnal desire is sweet, but it is sinful, corruptive, and repugnant to God. Do not attach yourself with your

heart to any feminine beauty, but to the Lord God alone, Who has created every beauty for His own sake, and say, "*It is good for me to cleave unto God*" (Psalm 72:28), to God alone, and not to fleeting carnal beauty.

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Despondency resulting from failure in any work done for others, especially that of a priest, and its accompanying sense of shame, come from our bodiless enemy, who ever seeks, like a roaring lion, to devour us, and who forces us into every failure, into every sin. Therefore, in order to be unerring in such matters, we must prepare ourselves in advance through study, combined with abstinence and prayer. We must strive for perfection in everything, and never give place to the devil. If failures do occur, let us not be overwhelmed with despondency, but, acknowledging before God our sin and infirmity, let us humble ourselves before Him, casting away our self-love. Without shame, let us confess our sin, carelessness, slothfulness, or weakness, and cast our sin into the abyss of God's mercy, asking for His grace and help for the successful accomplishment of our work in the future.

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In prayer and in every work of your life avoid suspiciousness, doubt, and diabolical fantasy. Let your spiritual eye be simple, so that the whole body of your prayer, of your works, and of your life may be light.

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During communal prayer, let your whole heart be in God, and do not on any account let it cling for a single moment to anything earthly. Cultivate also an ardent love for human souls, love for the sake of God, and be zealous for their salvation. Pray for them as you would for those in great misery, for it is said: "All we who are subjected to the enticements of the evil one are in misery."

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When hungry, do not throw yourself at your food, because you will overfill your heart as well as your body. Eat slowly, without voracity,

reflecting on the glory of God, Who feeds us above all, remember His incorruptible food, His Body and Blood, given to us for the love He bears us. Remember also the Holy Word of the Gospel.

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Everything that disturbs us and erodes the heart at its very foundation comes from the devil, for he himself is eternal disturbance and oppression. The Lord is the peace and rest of the heart. "*Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matt 11:28). "*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you*" (John 14:27). How many passions there are, how much disturbance and affliction; how many attachments, how many sharp arrows penetrating the heart, and how much darkness! The greater part of a man's life is spent in spiritual darkness.

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If thoughts of self-praise and self-satisfaction occur to you, say, "I myself am nothing; all that is good in me is accomplished by the grace of God." "*And what do you have that you did not receive?"* (1 Cor 4:7). "*For without Me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5). Should the thought of despising any of your neighbors or your family occur to you, say, "The entire man is the beautiful work of God's hands; everything in him is very well ordered,: for "*it was very good*" (Gen 1:31).

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What is your obligation as a communicant of the Holy Mysteries? You must "*seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God*" (Col 3:1), and not think of earthly things, for "Christ came upon earth in order to raise us up to heaven."[1] "*In My Father's house are many mansions … I go to prepare a place for you*" (John 14:2). "*Our citizenship is in heaven*" (Phil 3:20). "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt 5:3). "*Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt 5:20). "*Let the little children come to Me, … for of such is the kingdom of God*" (Luke 18:16). Do you see what the final purpose is for which Christ came to earth, for which He

gives us His Divine Mysteries, His Body and Blood? This purpose is to give us the kingdom of heaven. Let us aspire to gain it.

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Pride is of the devil; malice is of the devil; envy is of the same devil; the abomination of fornication is of the same devil; forceful blasphemy, of the same devil; doubt in the truth, of the same devil; despondency, of the same devil; the passions are various, but the same Satan acts in all of them. The passions are many, but they are all the barking of the same Satan, only in different tunes, and man, when subjected to them is one and the same spirit with Satan. When you are subjected to the malicious and furious violence of the passions and to the harassment of the devil, especially when you work for God, accept these sufferings as labors for the sake of Christ and rejoice in them, thanking God. The devil is preparing, without realizing it himself, the most shining crowns for you from the Lord! Amen. We must absolutely resist the devil.

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Do not be vexed with those who show pride, arrogance, laziness, and impatience in their conversation with you or others, but, remembering that you are subject to the same, even greater, sins and passions, pray for them and be kind to them. "*If a man is overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. Bear one another's burdens* [if anybody has offended you, and it is hard for you, bear this], *and so fulfill the law of Christ*" (Gal 6:1–2).

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Do you pay sufficient attention to the state of your soul? Are you watchful to its good health? If you see that it lives, is its life vigorous? And, if its present temporal life is happy, then is its eternal life, its eternal happiness, ensured by faith? Is there in your soul a living faith in God, in the Saviour, in the Church? Is the soul's eternal life secured with good works, meekness, humility, gentleness, love of truth and honesty, abstinence, chastity, mercy, patience, obedience, industry, and other virtues?

If the opposite is true, then all your labor is in vain. The soul, perhaps, does many things worthy of wonder, but it will be lost. *"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"* (Matt 16:26).

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A day is the symbol of how quickly earthly life passes away. It begins with the morning, then comes the day itself, followed by the evening. With the coming of the night, the whole day has passed away. So, likewise, life passes away. First, childhood, like the early morning; then, adolescence and adulthood, like the full day and noon; and then old age, like evening, if God grants it; afterward, inevitable death.

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Wherever a person goes, he always comes back home afterward. It is the same with the Christian, whoever he may be, whether he is a person of distinction or a commoner, rich or poor, educated or ignorant; wherever he may be, whatever station he may occupy in society, whatever he does, he must remember that he is not at home, but on a journey, and he must return home to his father, mother, to his elder brothers and sisters. This home is heaven; his father is God; his mother is the most-pure Theotokos; his elder brothers and sisters are the angels and saints of God. He must also remember that all his earthly duties and works are incidental, while the real work is the salvation of the soul, the fulfillment of Christ's commandments, the purification of the heart.

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What does it mean to love God with all our heart, with all our soul and all our strength, and with all our thoughts? With all our heart means undividedly, not tearing ourselves in two over our love for God and our love for the world. For example, when you pray, pray with an undivided heart, not allowing your attention to be distracted by vain thoughts and earthly attachments. Be wholly in God, in His love, with all your soul. In other words, do not only love Him with part of your soul. Do not restrict your love to your mind, without including your heart and will in this love. Love Him with all your strength, not with half your strength or partially.

When you have to fulfill any commandment, do it zealously, even unto sweat and blood, laying down your life for it if necessary, but never slothfully, lazily, or unwillingly.

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How self-contradictory is this world! Here is merriment, music, but here also are prayers, hymns, lamentation for the dead. Here are riches, luxury, splendor, but here also there is naked poverty, lack of everything, even of decent and sufficiently warm clothing, overcrowding, disgusting dirt and damp. Here is health, excess of strength, but here also we find disease, decrepitude, exhaustion. Here is enlightenment, knowledge, but here is also ignorance, darkness. Or sometimes worldly education is truly united with spiritual enlightenment and piety, and in this union there is beautiful and pleasant harmony and spiritual beauty, but at the same time we find worldly education accompanied by unbelief, immorality, spiritual distortion, lack of harmony, dissonance that harrows the soul. Here we find success in all undertakings, but here is failure also. Here everything is easily obtained (money, position in society, honors, distinctions), but here also a man strives with all his might and obtains nothing, or only by enormous efforts obtains only a little. Who shall solve this apparent contradiction? God alone. We can only conjecture.

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He who is insolent to other people is insolent to God, as many of us are. Respect the great, immeasurable image of God in man, and be forbearing to the faults and errors of fallen man, so that God may be forbearing to your own, because the enemy of God and mankind, being unable to vent his malice, impurity, darkness, pride, envy upon God, endeavors to vent it upon his image—man. Respect man, therefore, and save him; be vigilant with yourself also, do not become irritable nor malicious. Do not envy, do not offend, do not lie, do not commit adultery, do not steal, and so on.

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Our soul is simple as thought, as quick as a thought or lightning. In an instant, it can be wounded by sin and become attached to corruptible things;

in an instant it can fall away from the love of God and neighbor through a single sinful thought, a single passionate desire, a single malevolent thought. Therefore, we must constantly watch our heart, lest it incline to words or thoughts of evil. We must always strive to preserve our heart in God's simplicity and purity, in the love of God and neighbor.

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The best moments on earth are those during which we contemplate heavenly things, when we recognize or defend the truth, that heavenly dweller and citizen. Only then do we truly live. Therefore, the essential needs of the soul require that we should rise above the earth more often, upward to heaven. There is our true life, our true country that shall have no end.

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Looking at the many different amusements available to people, at everyone's worries about the flesh alone at the expense of the soul, I cannot help but think, do these people have a soul? And if they do, then why do they not care for it, why do they not think of its salvation? Instead, it is abandoned to countless sins that kill it eternally. Are there truly eternal torments and eternal bliss? And if these exist, then why do men strive so little, or do not strive at all, to escape eternal torments and to inherit eternal bliss? This is what astonishes me. Also, why do people not fear the terrible hour of death? For we cannot live on earth forever. At some moment, our turn will come, and we shall be told, "Return, sons of men, into the earth from which you were created." O, how heedless we are, how great is our pride, how manifold our passions and our attachments to the earth! Sinners, do you think that God has no ways of punishing you? O, there are ways, there are! There is the fiery Gehenna, the lake of fire, the terrible Tartarus, at which even Satan himself trembles, the worm that never dies, and the gnashing of teeth. But why do I speak of this only to you? I should say the same to myself, for I am the greatest of sinners. For me were the torments of hell prepared, but Christ, in Whom is all my hope, has saved me. But you, my brothers, do you all believe in Christ, in His Gospel? Where is your evangelical life? Who of you even reads the Gospel daily, that greatest gift of God, that law of life? "*They have all turned aside, They have together*

become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one" (Rom 3:12; compare Psalm 13:3).

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Both educated and ignorant young men seldom go to church, and in general they do not listen to their spiritual education, looking at it as unnecessary, giving themselves up to worldly pleasures. Attention must be paid to this. It is the fruit of pride, of the lack of spiritual development. They consider attendance at church and divine services as the business of the common people and women, forgetting that, in the church, angels officiate with trepidation, together with men, regarding this as their greatest joy.

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Is not coldness toward public worship, toward the Divine service, the result of the lack of understanding in some people? Others, although they have studied the Divine service, have been taught it drily, without any vivid examples, and so they learn merely with the mind. But the Divine service, while being the high contemplation of the mind, is at the same time preeminently the peace, sweetness, and blessedness of the heart.

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A priest, as the physician of souls, should himself be free from spiritual infirmities (i.e., from the passions) in order to be able to cure others; as a pastor, he should himself be pastured on the pasture of the Gospel and the writings of the Holy Fathers, in order to know where to pasture his sheep. He should be skillful in struggling against the spiritual wolves, in order to know how to drive them away from Christ's flock. He should be skillful and mighty in prayer and abstinence. He should not be bound by worldly desires and delights, especially by covetousness, self-love, pride, ambition. In short, he should be a light himself, in order to enlighten others; he should be spiritual salt, in order to preserve others from spiritual corruption; and he should be free from the corruption of the passions. If the reverse is the case, every spiritually sick person may say, "*Physician, heal thyself*" (Luke 4:23) first, and then I will let you heal me. "*Thou hypocrite, first cast out the*

beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matt 7:5).

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The heart is subtle, spiritual, and heavenly by nature; therefore, you must guard it. Do not overburden it, do not make it earthly. Be temperate to the utmost in food and drink and in bodily pleasures in general. The heart is the temple of God. "*If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him*" (1 Cor 3:17).

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Be a Christian in heart; that is, be always sincere in prayer, in your conversation with your neighbor, always believing, trusting, meek, gentle, wishing well to everybody, just, generous, compassionate, merciful, abstinent, chaste, patient, obedient, courageous.

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O, how dearly our Lord Jesus Christ valued our soul and its salvation, having come down to earth, having taken upon Himself our soul and body, having suffered and died for us! But how do I value my soul and its eternal salvation? O, I do not know how to value it, and I have not until now learned how to respond to the love of my Saviour, having attached myself wholly to the earth, having abandoned myself to slothfulness and various passions. How can the love of God, the kingdom of heaven, be in you when in your heart reigns earthly love, sensuality, avarice, and pride? It is impossible, until you have "*crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*" (Gal 5:24), "*for no one can serve two masters*" (Matt 6:24), and "*whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God*" (Jas 4:4). "*Do not love the world or the things in the world … For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father … And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever*" (1 John 2:15–17).

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Our Lord God is pleased with us for our persistent request for His mercies, seeing in our determination our faith and love for Him. But we accursed sinners become angry with the poor who daily and persistently ask alms of us, even with poor children, whose confidence in people is especially great, and whose belief in the goodness of others is boundless, because they themselves are simple, good, and meek. Being covetous, sensual, and proud, we often look contemptuously at them, scream at them (the meek lambs!), lose our temper, refusing to understand that hunger, lack of clothes and shoes, and urgent demand to pay rent for their miserable lodgings force them to beg persistently of us. Is it not they that cry out to the Lord against us in the words of the prophet David, "*Our soul is fed up with the scornful reproof of the wealthy, and the disparaging of the proud*" (Psalm 122:4)? And certainly, sooner or later, the voice of their complaint shall reach heaven. What am I saying? It has already long ago reached the ears of the Lord God of Sabbaoth, and it will move Him to wrath and righteous retribution against us.

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Until now, I have not become impoverished by being merciful to others, and I shall never become impoverished, for "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever*" (Heb 13:8). It is not said without reason that "He that giveth to the poor shall not lack." Indeed, until this day, the Lord has only increased my earthly blessings, and has taken none of them away. I praise the generosity of the Lord, His rich providence!

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You are the representative of the faith and the Church, O priest. You are the representative of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; therefore, you must be an example of meekness, purity, courage, firmness, patience, elevation of spirit. You are doing God's work, and you must not lose courage before anybody. You must never flatter anyone, nor be servile, and you must consider your work to be higher than all human affairs.

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He who is accustomed to give account of his life at confession here will not fear to give an answer at the terrible judgment seat of Christ. It is for this purpose that the mild tribunal of repentance was here instituted, so that we, being cleansed and changed through repentance here below, may give an answer without shame at the final judgment of Christ. This is the first inducement for sincerity in confession; and, moreover, it is the reason that we must confess at the very least once a year. The longer we remain without confessing, the worse it is for us, the more entangled we become in the bonds of sin, and therefore the more difficult it is to give an account of our spiritual life. The second inducement is inner consolation—the more sincere our confession, the calmer will the soul be afterward. Sins are secret serpents gnawing at the heart of a man and all his being. They do not let him rest; they continually suck his heart. Sins are prickly thorns, constantly goring the soul. Sins are spiritual darkness. Those who repent must bring fruits of repentance.

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Confession, memory, imagination, feeling, and will—these are all aids to repentance. Since we sin with all the powers of our soul, our repentance must come from our whole soul. Repentance in words only, without the intention of changing oneself, and without the feeling of contrition, is hypocrisy. Should our consciousness of sinfulness become obscured, it must be cleared up. Should our senses become dulled, they must be roused. Should our will become blunt and too weak for change, it must be forced. "*The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt 11:12). Confession must be sincere, profound, and complete.

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O, my brothers! Shall we not all soon vanish from the face of the earth, as though we had never existed? Where, then, are our works of love? Where is the fulfillment of the Creator's commandments? Where is the spirit of Christ in us? Where is gentleness, where is humility, where is love for souls, where is detachment from earthly things? Where is zeal for spiritual blessings? How vain and foolish we are! We have distorted the image of our souls, distorted our life, perverted it, turned it upside down. Instead of pleasing Christ, we please the devil.

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This tranquil, beautiful sky, plowed with stars, will some day become the terrifying stage for the second coming of the Lord. O sinners, be taught daily by the sight of the sky, while there is still time to learn. "*The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken*" (Matt 24:29).

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My brother, there is a true, real life, and there is also a false, imaginary life. To live in order to eat, drink, dress, walk, to become rich, or in general to live exclusively for earthly pleasures, as well as living to cause intrigues, to think ourselves competent judges of everything and everybody—this is a false life. To live in order to please God and serve our neighbors, to pray for the salvation of their souls, and to help them in the work of their salvation in every way—this is the true life. The first life is continual spiritual death, the second is the uninterrupted life of the spirit.

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The Lord said of His Church: "*I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*" (Matt 16:18). This is said concerning the pastors of the Church, the Church hierarchy, and all true believers, as well as all the sacraments, the dogmas and commandments of the Holy Orthodox faith, and all the divine services, such as the Liturgy, Holy Orders, Matrimony, Baptism, Chrism, Holy Oil, which have been established for all time and have already existed unchanged during many centuries. See how firmly established is the Church, founded by the Lord! Remember these words of the Lord, and do not waver in the slightest degree when celebrating any of the sacraments. Be as strong as adamant.

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I love to pray in God's church, especially in the altar, before the Holy Table or the Prothesis, for by God's grace I become miraculously changed in the church. During repentant and devoted prayer, the thorns and bonds of the passions fall from my soul, and I feel so light! All the fascination and

allurement of the passions vanishes, and I seem to die to the world, and the world, with all its blessings, dies for me. I live in God and for God, for God alone. I am completely filled with Him, and I am one spirit with Him. I become like a child soothed on its mother's knee. Then my heart is full of heavenly, sweet peace. My soul is enlightened by the light of heaven. At such times, we see everything clearly; we look upon everything correctly; we feel friendship and love toward everyone, even toward our enemies, readily excusing and forgiving everyone. O, how blessed is the soul when it is with God! Truly the Church is paradise on earth.

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What is the terrifying thing for a person? Death? Yes, death. None of us can imagine, without terror, how he will have to die and breathe his last breath. How parents grieve when their beloved children die, when they lie breathless before their eyes! But, brothers, do not fear, and do not grieve beyond measure. By His death, Jesus Christ our Saviour has conquered our death, and by His resurrection He has laid the foundation for our resurrection, and every Sunday, we celebrate, in the risen Christ, the universal resurrection from the dead. Before its time, we begin life eternal, to which our present, temporal life is but a short, narrow, and sorrowful way. For a true Christian, death is merely like sleep until the day of resurrection, or like a birth into new life. And thus, by celebrating the resurrection of Christ and our own resurrection from the dead every Sunday, let us learn to continually die to sin and to resurrect with our souls from dead works, to enrich ourselves with virtues, and not sorrow inconsolably for the dead. Let us learn to meet death without dread, since it is the will of the Heavenly Father. Therefore, by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, death has lost its terror.

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Sin is foolish and destructive. For instance, a drunkard loses his health as a result of the excessive consumption of spirits and indulges in various dissipation and shameful acts, which he himself is ashamed to remember afterward. And yet, he continues to abandon himself to drink. A glutton, after excessive eating, feels heavy, his capabilities become obscured, his tongue is bound, and he himself sees that he has become like an animal,

bestial in nature, because his satiety is often accompanied by irritation and spite against those who live with him, or those who daily ask alms of him. He is subject to sorrow and affliction; he is deprived of peace and tranquility; he becomes incapable of contemplating heavenly things or being a true Christian. He loses the ability to live for the highest goals of his existence. And yet, he continues to be greedy after sweet things and food. An adulterer sees that through adultery he defiles and dishonors his nature, soul, and body, subjecting them to maladies and perverting the proper order established by the Creator. He exposes himself to shame, and yet he continues to commit adultery. A miser sees that his riches are a burden to him, that they deprive him of his spiritual freedom and make him their slave, that they turn him away from God and the love of his neighbor, that they draw him away from the true life and bring death into his soul, depriving him of spiritual and bodily rest. He is bound with heavy anxiety for his riches, and yet he continues to accumulate riches and to add to his load, until, exhausted by cares, he falls ill and dies, having lost his soul through the accumulation of riches. It is the same with every sin—pride, malice, envy, and others.

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We must destroy earthly love in ourselves, that is, a passion for earthly, carnal beauty, for pleasures, gain, our own flesh, honor. Instead, we should quicken in ourselves love for heaven, our true country; for the soul, the heavenly citizen; for virtue. We must come to hate everything that the flesh loves, and we must love that which it despises and fears (such as remembrance of death and the judgment). We must also love poverty, as well as the sick and suffering.

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Let others mock you, oppose you when you are under the influence of the passions; do not be in the least offended at those who mock or antagonize you, for they are benefiting you. Crucify your self-love and acknowledge the delusion of your heart. But have the deepest pity for those who mock the words and works of faith, piety, and righteousness. Be upset at those who oppose the good that you are doing or that you wish to inspire in others. However, God preserve you from becoming exasperated with them,

for they are deserving of pity and tears. Glory to You, Lord, my Saviour, for having delivered me from the tyranny of the passions, according to my prayer.

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When you are in church, remember that you are in the living presence of the Lord God, that you stand before His face, before His eyes, in the living presence of the Mother of God, the holy angels, and the first-born of the Church—our forefathers, the prophets, apostles, hierarchs, martyrs, Holy Fathers, and all the saints. Always be aware of this when you are in church and stand with devotion, taking part willingly, with your whole heart, in the divine service.

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Morally speaking, I am nothing. Without the Lord, I have not one true thought or good feeling, and can accomplish no good works. Without Him, I cannot drive away a single sinful thought or passionate feeling, such as malice, envy, fornication, pride, etc. The Lord is the accomplishment of everything good that I do, think, and feel. O, how boundlessly wide is the Lord's grace acting within me! The Lord is everything to me, and so obviously, so constantly! All I have is my sinfulness; all I have is infirmities. O, how we should love our Lord, Who was pleased to call us into existence from nonexistence, to honor us with His image and likeness, to establish us in a paradise of delights, to subdue the earth to us. When we did not keep His commandments, but were allured by the delusion of the devil, immeasurably offending our Creator by our ingratitude, and thereby assimilating all the qualities of the tempter (pride, malice, envy, ingratitude) that he taught us as his prisoners, the Lord did not reject us forever, but deigned to redeem us from sin, from the curse of death into which we had fallen through sin. He appeared on earth, having assumed our nature. He became my teacher, my healer, a worker of miracles, my Saviour. He bore our punishment for us; He died for us so that we should not be eternally lost. He rose from the dead in order to resurrect us after death. He ascended into heaven so that we should also ascend, we who had fallen so low through sin. He became everything to us—food, drink, light, purification,

sanctification, health. He is the power that protects, saves, and preserves, and has mercy on us.

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I myself am nothing, but through the grace of the priesthood, by giving to others the Divine Body and Blood, I become the secondary or tertiary source of healing from sicknesses. Through me, the grace of the Spirit gives new life to children and adults; it accomplishes the sacrament of the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, uniting believers with God. Through me, divine grace looses or binds the sins of men, opens or closes heaven, gives advice and rules for salvation, etc. O, how worthy of respect is the office of priest! Do you not see, my brothers, how many benefits the Creator and Saviour heaps on you through priests?

* * *

Very often the darkness of the spirit of anger surrounds our heart, not allowing us to speak kindly to those who have offended us once (or several times) or have expressed some animosity to us. We must pray fervently to the Lord that He Himself would disperse this darkness of anger, instead filling our heart with mercy and love, even for our enemies, for they, in the blindness of the passions (pride, envy, covetousness, anger), do not themselves know what they are doing, in the same way that the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ knew not what they did when they persecuted Him for the duration of His life, at last subjecting Him to a shameful death. We must remember that the Christian faith consists in loving our enemies, *"For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"* (Matt 5:46).

* * *

"*But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*" (Matt 6:33). How do we seek the kingdom of God first of all? In the following manner: suppose that you wish to walk, drive, or sail somewhere on some worldly business. Before you leave, first pray to the Lord to correct the ways of your heart, and then also ask Him to bless your present journey. Ask Him to direct the paths of your life always

according to His commandments. Desire this with your whole heart and pray repeatedly concerning this. The Lord, seeing your sincere desire and endeavor to walk according to His commandments, will correct all your ways, little by little. Here is another example. If you want to air out your room, or if you go for a walk in the fresh air, think of the pure and the impure heart. Many of us like to have fresh air in our room (and this is an excellent habit), or are fond of walking in the fresh air, but they do not even think of the necessity of the purity of the spirit or heart (which is, so to speak, spiritual air, the breath of life). While they breathe in the fresh air, they allow themselves to indulge in impure thoughts, impure movements of the heart, foul language, and even most impure carnal sins. Another example: If you seek created light, remember the spiritual light that is indispensable for the soul, and without which the soul will remain in the darkness of the passions, in the darkness of spiritual death. "*I have come as a light into the world*," said the Lord, "*that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness*" (John 12:46). If you see the fury and hear the howling of a storm, or read of shipwrecks, think of the storm of human passions daily groaning and disturbing the hearts of men, wrecking the spiritual ship of the soul or the ship of human society. Ask the Lord fervently in prayer to subdue the storm of sins, as He once subdued the storm at sea by His word; ask Him to root out our passions from our hearts and to reestablish unceasing tranquility in them. If you feel hunger or thirst, remember the hunger or thirst of the soul (after righteousness, for justification in Christ Jesus, for sanctification), which, if you do not satisfy, may starve the soul, crush it with passions, weaken and exhaust it. When you satisfy the hunger of your body, do not forget to appease, above all and before all, your spiritual hunger through speaking with God, through heartfelt repentance, through reading the story and precepts of the Gospel, and especially through the communion of the Divine Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ. If you are fond of dressing elegantly, or when you put on your clothes, think of the incorruptible garment of righteousness in which our souls should be arrayed. Think of Jesus Christ, our spiritual raiment, as it is written, "*For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ*" (Gal 3:27). A passion for dressing well often obscures in the heart the very thought of the incorruptible raiment of the soul, turning our whole life into vain worries about elegance in dress. If you are a scholar, a student in any educational establishment, a civil servant, an

officer in any of the branches of the military service, an engineer, a painter, a sculptor, a manufacturer, a mechanic—remember that the most important subject for each one of you to perfect is how to be a true Christian, to believe sincerely in the Holy Trinity, to speak daily with God in prayer, to take part in the divine services, to observe the rules and regulations of the Church, and to bear in your heart—before your work, during your work, and after your work—the name of Jesus, for He is our light, our strength, our holiness, and our help.

* * *

What a strange thing! However much we trouble about our health, however much we care for ourselves, however much healthy food we eat, however much we walk in the fresh air, we are still finally subject to disease and dying. But the saints, who despised their flesh and mortified it by constant abstinence and fasting, by lying on the bare earth, by vigilance, labors, unceasing prayer, have made both their souls and bodies immortal. Our well-fed bodies decay and stink after death, but the bodies of the saints remain fragrant and flourishing in death as well as in life. What a strange thing! As we build up our body, we destroy it, but as the saints destroy their body, they give it new life! By only caring for the fragrance of their souls before God, they also obtained the fragrance of their bodies. Brothers! Understand the purpose of your life. We must mortify our body, with its many passions, through abstinence, labor, prayer, not animate the body and its passions through food, comfort, and slothfulness.

* * *

It is altogether good to give to the poor, not only because we will obtain mercy on the terrible Day of Judgment. Even here, on earth, those who give to the poor often receive great benefits from their neighbors. That which others obtain only with large sums of money, they receive for free. Indeed, will not the Lover of mankind, the most-righteous and the most-bountiful Heavenly Father, Whose children are the poor, reward givers here also, in order to encourage them to perform still greater works of mercy, to continue their previous works of mercy, even to attempt the improvement of the unmerciful who mock those who give alms? Truly, worthily He will reward them.

* * *

How many trifling, never-ending pretexts does the hater of mankind offer us for hating our neighbor! As a result, we are almost constantly angry with others, almost constantly holding grudges against others, almost constantly living according to the devil's all-destructive will. Let us not chase after his phantoms; instead, let us put aside all enmity and love everyone, for love is from God.

* * *

O Lord, You continually conquer hell in me, according to my prayer! If I am not yet in hell, it is through Your mercy, O Conqueror of hell, my Lord! Glory to You, our Benefactor, our Saviour! What would have happened to us without You? We should truly have been like the beasts; we would have exterminated each other. It would have happened to individuals; it would also have happened with nations. If individuals, as well as nations, lived according to the Gospel, then there would not be any enmity, dissension, or war. When shall we fully acknowledge the one thing needful for our temporal and eternal good—to live according to the Gospel? But now how few there are who even read the Gospel!

* * *

Lord! I confess that neither in my country house, nor in the forest do I find myself alive, full of heath and vigor in body and soul. I am only truly living when I am with You in church, especially during Liturgy and in Thy Holy Life-giving Mysteries! O, greatest blessedness of the Holy Mysteries! O, Life-giving Mysteries! O, Divine Mysteries that are love unspeakable! O, Divine Mysteries that are the Lord God's constant and wonderful providence for our salvation and sanctification! O, Divine Mysteries, foreshadowing of eternal life!

* * *

O My Lady Theotokos! Before the Liturgy, I prayed to You for the grace to celebrate it with great power, for the glory of God and the salvation of

the world, for the salvation of my own sinful self! You have answered my prayer. I thank You, all-good helper, quick to heart, our unfailing trust!

* * *

How many benefits has my faith in Christ brought me until this moment! Without speaking of all His countless benefits, I will mention a few. How much spiritual confusion has my faith dispelled! How many passions has it driven away! How many crooked inclinations of the heart has it straightened! How many times has it cleansed me from my sins and saved my soul from spiritual death! How near is our Lord to him who believes! He is like the air, like the breath of our lungs, like the beating of our heart.

* * *

Lord, I thank You with my whole heart for the blessed grace of Your Holy Spirit during divine services and prayer, both communal and personal. I thank You for the forgiveness of my sins, for peace, for devotion and tears, for Your fatherly consolation, for boldness, for strength.

* * *

As a priest, pray first of all for the cleansing from sins and the enlightenment and renewal of God’s people, as well as your own renewal. For, although you often drink the Blood of the New Testament and eat the life-giving Flesh of the Lamb of God, which can speedily regenerate and renew you, you are not yet reborn or renewed, because of your lack of zeal. Instead, in the depths of your heart, you serve the same passions that you did before. Offer, then, to God your most fervent prayer for your own renewal, as well as that of His people. This is the most pleasing sacrifice to God. Offer your prayers with faith, firm trust, and love unfeigned. To Him Who came to make new garments out of the old, and to pour new wine into old skins, prayer for renewal is like fragrant incense. It is our cooperation with the Lord’s work of renewing the human race, decayed by sin.

* * *

He who obeys without complaining receives spiritual benefit. We see this vividly in the example of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who for His utter obedience was exalted in His human nature above all principalities, powers, and authorities. We see this also in the lives of God's saints, who for their obedience to the Son of God and His Gospel were deemed worthy of incorruptible heavenly crowns and eternal life with God and His holy angels. In addition, obedience is also profitable to the body, because everything that the lazy do not receive is acquired abundantly by those who fulfill their obedience with zealous labor. Therefore, obedience is profitable both to the soul and to the body; if in certain situations it is not beneficial for the body, it absolutely is for the soul. Therefore, let everyone be obedient in that which is good, but not in evil.

* * *

To be humble means to consider ourselves worthy of every humiliation, injury, persecution, and even physical injury on account of our sins. To be meek means to patiently endure injustice, abuse, etc., and to pray for our enemies.

* * *

The painful sorrow that you unintentionally inflict on another's heart shall return to your own heart, according to the strict law of requital: "*With the measure you use, it will be measured back to you*" (Matt 7:2). If you do not want sorrow for yourself, do not inflict it on others.

* * *

If people labor so assiduously for worldly vanity, often making us wait in vain for them, then should not we, God's servants, labor for the Lord God diligently, pausing with understanding, with feeling, with great reverence and zeal, reading the prayers distinctly, slowly? Let them wait for us, in this case. Lord, let it be thus at every divine service, at every sacrament. Accomplish all of this in us, for without You, we can do nothing (John 15:5).

* * *

A true Christian never forgets that in this world, he is a prisoner of the devil, and he continually sighs for the spiritual freedom given by the Son of God to all those who believe in Him and strive to free themselves from bondage to sin. A true Christian lives watchfully, using all earthly things in moderation. He does not spend his time in idle talk or idle amusement; he is not guilty of extortion, he does not envy. He prays continually and repents of his sins.

* * *

People say that there is nothing wrong with eating meat during Lent, because the significance of Lent is not measured in food. People say that there is nothing wrong with wearing costly, fine clothes; frequenting theaters, evening parties, masquerades; buying expensive plate, fine china, furniture, luxurious carriages, spirited horses; collecting and hoarding money, etc. But what turns our heart away from God, the Source of life? What causes us to lose eternal life? Is it not gluttony, expensive dress, as we read in the parable of the rich man in the Gospel? Is it not theaters and masquerades? What makes us hard-hearted to the poor, even to our own relatives? Is it not attachment to carnal pleasures in general, to our belly, to dress, plate, furniture, carriages, money, etc.? Can a man serve God and mammon?[2] Can a person be a friend of God and a friend of the world, work for Christ and for the devil at the same time? It is impossible. For what reason did Adam and Eve lose Paradise, what was the cause of their fall into sin and death? Was it not through food alone? Let us consider well what makes us careless about the salvation of our soul, which cost the Son of God so much! What makes us add one sin to another; what makes us fall continually into enmity against God, into a life of vanity? Is it not attachment to earthly things, especially to earthly pleasures? What makes our heart coarse? What things cause us to remain flesh, and not become spirit? What perverts our moral nature? Is it not attachment to food and drink and other earthly goods? How, after this, can you say that to eat meat during Lent is not something to worry about? To say so is nothing but pride, sophism, disobedience, lack of submission to God, and estrangement from Him.

* * *

From what deep sores, from what mortal wounds, from what deathly breath of sin did the heavenly Physician, our Lord Jesus Christ, come to save us? Who can fully understand this? Nobody. Only partially, from our own limited experience, some of us can see the depths of the abyss into which we have fallen through sin—all our powerlessness for good, all the power and abyss of the evil or sin residing in our hearts. But even to see this is granted to us by the grace of God, which enlightens our darkened hearts. A person cannot understand this with his merely human reasoning, and therefore he cannot see and feel the necessity of change, nor can he find the strength for such amendment and renewal.

* * *

I thank the Lord, Who is mighty in His mercy and merciful in His might, for speedy and great forgiveness, for the healing of deep spiritual wounds, caused by sin. What long, continual prayer at home could not do was accomplished by merely touching the life-giving, glorious, and awesome altar of God in the Church of the holy and glorious leaders of the Apostles —Peter and Paul. The wounds of my heart, my inner confusion, affliction, and constraint suddenly vanished, as if a great mountain had fallen from my heart, and I was at peace. My heart expanded and grew light, full of boldness. How wonderful are Thy works, O Lord! You are truly wonderful, sitting on Your throne of glory in Christian churches. O Lord, Most-righteous Judge, Most-merciful and Almighty Saviour! Glory to Your invincible goodness, King of the ages.

* * *

Brothers! Among the beings created by God, there are the temporal, transitory ones, such as all unintelligent creatures, both animate and inanimate, organic and inorganic, as well as the world itself, which will pass away, "*for the form of this world is passing away*" (1 Cor 7:31). Then there are eternal beings, which are not passing, such as the angels and the souls of men, the demons and Satan himself. For man, the earthly life, life in the body, serves only as a preparation for eternal life, which will begin after the death of the body. Therefore, we must avail ourselves without delay of the present life as a preparation for the other life. Since we chiefly work during week-days for our earthly life, we must work on Sundays and

other holidays only for the Lord God, devoting them to attendance at divine service, to reading the Word of God, to pious contemplation, to edifying conversation, good works, and especially to works of mercy. They sin grievously who neglect the matter of their spiritual education for eternal life in the world above. How can we forget our final destination? How is it possible to be so ungrateful to the Creator, Who created us in His own image and likeness, incorruptible, prepared for union with Himself? He redeemed us by His cross, and opened to us the gates of the kingdom of heaven! How can so many of us become "*compared unto the brute beasts, and is become like unto them*" (Psalm 48:13)? "*Let us lift up our hearts!*"[3]

* * *

The body, being only the temporal garment of the soul, is perishable and does not constitute the true life of the man. The true life is the spiritual life. If you rip and destroy a person's clothing, he still remains alive. In the same way, after the death and the corruption of the body, the soul remains alive. Let us then chiefly care for the soul and its salvation!

* * *

O, Holy Church, how good, how sweet it is to pray in you! For where else can there be fervent prayer, if not inside your walls, before the throne of God, before the face of Him Who sits upon it? Truly, my soul is overcome with prayerful emotion, and tears flow down my cheeks like water. How sweet it is to pray for everyone!

* * *

I marvel at the great and life-giving Holy Mysteries. An old woman who was spitting blood and who had lost all her strength was no longer able to eat anything. But after the Communion of the Holy Mysteries, which I administered to her, she began to recover on the same day from her illness. A young girl who was near death also began to recover on the same day as her communing of the Holy Mysteries. She started to eat, drink, and speak, while before she was nearly delirious, would shake uncontrollably, and could neither eat nor drink anything. Glory to Thy life-giving and terrible Mysteries, O Lord!

* * *

Be true to God always and in all things. If you say the prayer “Our Father,” pronounce each word sincerely, with reverence, fixing your mind and heart upon God alone, not paying attention to anything or anybody around you. If you say any other prayer, say it also with your whole soul, not with a heart divided, not paying undue attention to anything or anybody. The enemy of our salvation especially tries to draw our heart and mind away from God when we are about to serve Him, and he endeavors to attach our heart to something irrelevant. Be always with God, every moment, especially when you pray to Him. At this time be especially faithful and constant to Him. If you are inconstant, you will fall away from life, and you will cast yourself into sorrow and constraint.

* * *

Do not rush to eat and drink, but rather rush to perform God’s service. When performing God’s service, do not think of food and drink. Firmly call to mind the One before Whom you stand, with Whom you are speaking, to Whom you are singing praises. Be wholly in God, belong wholly to Him alone, pray with your whole heart, sing with your whole heart. When you serve others, do it as you would like to be served—gladly, genuinely, not with a divided heart and thoughts. Lord, help us! “*For without Me you can do nothing*” (John 15:5).

* * *

When the heart is pure, the whole man is pure. When the heart is unclean, the whole man is unclean, “*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies …*” (Matt 15:19). But the saints all acquired pure hearts through fasting, vigilance, prayer, pious contemplation, reading the Word of God, martyrdom, labor, and sweat. And the Holy Spirit entered into them, cleansed them from every impurity, and sanctified them with eternal sanctification. Strive also, above all other things, for the cleansing of your heart. “*Make me a clean heart, O God*” (Psalm 50:12).

* * *

Do not value God's sacraments with the price of gold and silver. That which you have freely received, be also ready to freely give. Leave the reward for your labor to the free will of those who receive the sacraments, and labor for those who give the smallest remuneration for your spiritual labor (whether they are poor or not), with as much willingness as for those who offer you a large sum. Doing God's work, do not think of silver. Do not offend the Holy Spirit, and do not sell God's gifts, lest money be the cause of your own destruction. Indeed, some really do sell, and others buy, or think of buying, the gifts of the Holy Spirit for silver, like Simon Magus.

* * *

Food and drink must only be used to keep up our strength, not for the pleasure of eating, and we must not eat when nature does not require it. Many of us (I count myself the worst offender), if we do not repent and correct ourselves, will be condemned for eating and drinking not at the appropriate time, because we, having our reason, lived like irrational animals and darkened our foolish hearts. We have amused ourselves with food and drink, and have often eaten and drunk when there was no need to eat and drink: "*Woe to you who are full! For you shall hunger*" (Luke 6:25). "*You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter*" (Jas 5:5).

* * *

You must pay strict and constant attention to your daily eating and drinking, for from food and drink, from their quality and quantity, depends the quality of your spiritual, social, and family life. "*Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life*" (Luke 21:34). Tea and coffee also pertain to drunkenness if indulged in unnecessarily and in excess. O, woe unto us who are full now, and frequently neglect God's gifts.

* * *

The devil harms us through our own flesh and, in general, through our being tied to the worldly. Thus, through wine, tea, coffee, exquisite food, money, dress, etc., he inflames our passions. Therefore, we must avoid

drinking too much wine, tea, or coffee, as well as eating sweets, especially at the expense of substantial, solid, and wholesome food. These sweets must only be eaten after everything else, and in the most moderate quantity.

* * *

"*Satan asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat*" (Luke 22:31). It is he who so greatly distracts our thoughts in the church during divine services and at home during prayer; it is he who draws away our thoughts from God, from our souls and the souls of others, from heavenly and eternal things. It is he who occupies us with earthly trifles, earthly vanity, earthly nothingness, earthly allurements, food, drink, dress, houses, etc. We must pray for each other, so that our faith would not fail, as the Saviour prayed for Peter.

* * *

When you eat a great deal, you becomes a carnal person, having no spirit —a body with no soul. But if you fast, you attract the Holy Spirit and becomes spiritual. Take a piece of cotton—it is light and is easily picked up by a bit of wind. But if you pour some water on it, it becomes heavy and immediately falls to the ground. It is the same with the soul. O, how important it is to preserve it by fasting!

* * *

Is unwilling, superficial prayer profitable? No, it is repugnant to God. The same applies to study. Unwilling, superficial study is not profitable. The person who prays unwillingly only rushes through the words, often without understanding their power, without feeling them. Consequently, his heart is not enlightened, warmed, vivified by them. It is the same with an unwilling student. It is necessary, when teaching, to accustom your students to study with willingness and to teach them to think about what they say.

* * *

What is your name according to the faith? Christian. What does that mean? It means that I am a member of the Body of Christ, the Church of

Christ. It means that I am a servant of Christ. What obligations come with the name “Christian”? I must always have Christ in my thoughts and heart, always live according to His spirit, imitating His life, fulfilling His holy commandments, and “*seek[ing] those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God*” (Col 3:1).

* * *

What is holiness? It is freedom from every sin and the fullness of virtue. This freedom from sin and this virtuous life are only attained by a few zealous persons, not immediately, but gradually, through prolonged and manifold sorrows, sicknesses, and labors, through fasting, vigilance, prayer, not by their own strength, but by the grace of Christ. Only Our Lady, the Mother of God, was sanctified from Her early childhood, from Her mother’s womb, and afterward the Lord sanctified Her in the Holy of Holies with the most perfect sanctification, because She prayed unceasingly, read of the Word of God and meditated on it, and through the teaching of the pure, heavenly and bodiless powers, but especially through Her own inner illumination. Holiness corresponds in nature to the light of the sun and to the whiteness of snow, while sin is darkness, lack of light, and filth or rust.

* * *

When you look at the icon of the Mother of God, with Her Preeternal Child, marvel how God was completely united with human nature, glorify the goodness and omnipotence of God, and, recognizing your own dignity as man, live worthily of the high calling to which you are called in Christ—that is, the calling of a child of God and an heir to eternal bliss.

* * *

Why does the Lord prolong man’s days on the earth? In order that everyone should have time to repent and to cleanse himself from sins and passions, in order that truth and love should entirely penetrate his heart through the training of its emotions in discernment of good and evil.

* * *

What is the human soul? It is the same soul, the same breath of God that God breathed into Adam, and which until this day is diffused from Adam to the entire human race. Therefore, all people are nothing less than one being, one great tree of mankind. From this comes the most natural commandment, founded on the unity of our nature: "*You shall love the Lord your God* [your Prototype, your Father] *with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength…. You shall love your neighbor [for who can be nearer to me than the man who is like me, of the same blood as I?] as yourself*" (Mark 12:30, 31). To fulfill these two commandments is a natural necessity.

* * *

Receive everyone who comes to you, especially with a spiritual purpose, with a kind and cheerful expression, even if he or she is a beggar. Humble yourself inwardly before all, counting yourself lower than they, for you are instructed by Christ Himself to be the servant of all. All are His members, although, like you, they bear the wounds of sin.

* * *

We must not doubt the truth of the Gospel and the Biblical readings during services. Everything that is in the Gospel and is read in the Church is the breath of the Spirit of Truth, "*the silver, which from the earth is tried, and purified seven times in the fire*" (Psalm 11:7), life, peace and spiritual sweetness. It will be terrible for him who doubts, for the lying spirit shall darken, oppress, and plunge him into despondency and affliction. This is from experience.

* * *

It is pleasing to the Lord, our most loving Father, when we pray for others, His children; and in the same way that parents, at the request of their good and well-behaved children, forgive their wicked, capricious, and badly behaved children, the heavenly Father, at the prayer of those "*who are His*" (2 Tim 2:19), or at the prayer for the people of the priests who invested with His grace, also has mercy on the unworthy, as He had mercy on and forgave

the rebellious and murmuring Hebrew people in the desert at Moses' prayer. But what a fervent prayer that was!

* * *

To the glory of the Most-holy name of our Master the Lord Jesus Christ and Our Lady, the Mother of God, after the Communion of the Holy Mysteries or after fervent prayer at home (either ordinary prayer or prayer in consequence of some sin, passion, sorrow and constraint), I have experienced a thousand times in my heart how the Lord, at the prayers of Our Lady, bestowed on me a new spiritual nature—pure, virtuous, bright, wise, beneficent, no longer impure, despondent, languid, fainthearted, dark, dull, and evil. Many times was I thus changed miraculously, to mine own amazement and that of others as well. Glory to Your power, Lord! Glory to Your mercy, Lord! Glory to Your generosity, Lord, which You have manifested in me, a sinner!

* * *

Our life is love—yes, love. And where there is love, there is God; and where God is, there is every good thing. "*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*" (Matt 6:33). Therefore, give food and good things to others without fear, fulfill every person's request joyfully, and trust in the Heavenly Father for everything, for He is a benevolent Father, the God of every consolation. Offer that which is dear to your heart as a sacrifice of love for your neighbor. Bring your Isaac, your heart, with its many passions, as a sacrifice to God, stab it of your own free will, crucify the flesh with its passions and lusts. Since you have received everything from God, be ready to return everything to God; and, having been faithful in small things, you may afterward be made ruler over many things. "*You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things*" (Matt 25:23). Consider all passions as nothing but illusions. I have found them to be so a thousand times. Amen.

* * *

O, how wise should the Christian be during his life! He should be like the many-eyed cherubim—all eyes, all intellect, all incessant reflection, except

in situations where absolute faith is required.

* * *

Christian! Remember and always bear in your mind and heart the great words of the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father Who art in heaven." Do you remember Who our Father is? God is our Father, our love. Who are we? We are the children of God, brothers to each other. What sort of love should the children of such a Father have among themselves? "*If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham*" (John 8:39). What works, then, should we do? "Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done. Give us this day our daily bread." *Our* bread, common to all and not for me alone. Self-love must be banished from the hearts of God's children; we are all one. "And forgive us our trespasses." Do you hope that God will forgive your trespasses? Therefore, make it a constant habit to forgive the sins of those who trespass against you, knowing that love is long-suffering and compassionate. "Lead us not into temptation …." You, yourself, should also not give in to temptation: "*Suffer not thy feet to slip; nor He that keepeth thee to slumber. The Lord is thy shelter upon thy right hand*" (Psalm 120:3, 5), "*but deliver us from the evil one*" (Matt 6:13). Do not willingly give yourself up to evil, and neither will the Lord abandon you to it. "For Thine is the kingdom [acknowledge the one King, God, and serve Him alone], the power [trust in His almighty power] and the glory [be zealous for His glory with all your might, during your entire life], forever [He is the eternal King, while Satan's kingdom shall soon pass away, being predatory and false]. Amen." This is all true. Remember this prayer above all, and repeat it more often in your mind, thinking over the meaning of each word, each expression, each petition.

* * *

Brothers and sisters! You were born again (after your physical birth) by water and the Spirit, and you became the children of God. So tell me, do you live in a manner worthy of this high calling? Do you live as the children of God should live? Is it evident from your behavior and actions that your "*citizenship is in heaven*" (Phil 3:20)? Is it evident that you await your Lord's second coming from heaven, as He promised us in His holy Word? Do you despise earthly things, and do you aspire with your whole

heart after heavenly things? Do you not rather love this adulterous and sinful world? "*If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him*" (1 John 2:15). "*That friendship with the world is enmity with God. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father*" (1 John 2:15–16). This world has crucified and continues to crucify the Son of God, brothers and sisters! Examine your life: do you live according to the Gospel? Is not your life antagonistic to the Gospel? Read the first chapters of the Gospel according to St Matthew more often![4]

* * *

Save us, your people, O Lady! Save us, who are of the same blood as You! Save us, Mother of Life and Mother of us all, although we are not worthy to call You our Mother! Cleanse, sanctify, strengthen, and save us through Your prayers!

* * *

For what purpose do I have an estate? In order to have means of supporting myself, my family and my relatives, and in order to help the poor, but not for the purpose of hoarding wealth. Give generously, so that God may mete out bountifully to you, according to your gift. Besides, all of our property or all of our means of existence are God's, not ours, and God is the Master of life. He takes care to maintain us in our earthly life, either by giving us direct opportunities, through others, or through His own miraculous help. "*Let us commend ourselves and each other, and all our life to Christ our God.*"[5] We say that we must have enough to live, but our life is God! Therefore, God gives and will provide all the necessities of life.

* * *

Many worldly magazines and newspapers, the number of which has so greatly increased recently, have an earthly spirit, frequently ungodly, while the Christian (in his hope) is a citizen not only of the earth, but also of heaven. Therefore, he should also meditate upon heavenly things. The heathen writings of antiquity were, it would seem, often better and purer (Cicero, for instance), higher in their principle and inspiration than some

Christian writings. The Hypostatic Word of the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ, is continually and greatly offended by Christian peoples, who should be first and foremost reasonable creatures, and so should strive to be God-like, both in their speech and writings, but in actual fact, their words are often wasted in vain and even tempt other Christians to be distracted by worldly writings from reading the Word of God and the writings of the Holy Fathers. The editors and publishers of worldly magazines and newspapers ensnare and entice the flock of Christ with myriad flattering words. O Word of God! What answer shall we give at the terrible judgment?

* * *

Who in our time reads the divinely inspired Psalter at home, even though it instills such great faith in God, such strong trust in God during misfortunes, sicknesses, and sorrows, and such fervent love for God? Who reads the divinely inspired Psalms, the favorite reading of our forefathers, not only among the common people, but also among nobles and princes? Such reading is not to be found nowadays. Because of this, many people lack faith, trust in God, and love for God and their neighbor, all of which are replaced by unbelief, despair, and hatred. There is no fervent prayer, no moral purity, no spirit of contrition for sins, no devotion, no righteousness, no peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The majority of Christians are filled with the spirit of the world, the spirit of magazines, newspapers, and worldly writers in general, who have rather a pagan, not a Christian spirit. Their writings are imbued with the spirit of the denial of the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, with the spirit of self-exaltation, with the spirit of exaltation of their own proud and presumptuous intellect, and with the spirit of worldly vanity.

* * *

Everything that the Church offers to our speaking and hearing is truth, the breath or teaching of the Holy Spirit. Honor every thought, every word of the Church. Remember that the sphere of thought and word, as well as the whole visible and invisible world, belong to God. You have nothing of your own, not a single thought or word. Everything is our Father’s; everything is God’s. Become part of the harmonious whole, as gold easily

intermixes with other metals, or as nature forms a single harmonious organism. Do not lead a self-loving, separate life.

* * *

The breaking up of the ice in the seas and rivers is an image of the departure of our soul from the body. When the waters are freed from ice, they come face to face with the air, which begins to move them, and with the sun, which begins to bathe in them. In the same way, pure souls, being freed from their bodies, come face to face with Christ, are refreshed by Him, and are made resplendent by Him. The waters, while they are covered with ice, are as though imprisoned in chains; they have no immediate contact with the air and the light of the sun. In the same way, our souls, while they are enclosed in the body, have no immediate communication with God and His saints. They have limited ability to communicate with them through the body, but only when we have shuffled off this mortal coil will we see our Lord face to face, in the same way as the waters, when they are freed from the ice, are directly exposed to the sun and come into direct contact with the air.

* * *

Our heart is simple, single, and therefore it cannot "*serve two masters … God and mammon*" (Matt 6:24)—that is, riches. This means that it is impossible to serve God and be attached to earthly things at the same time, for all such things are mammon. Besides, it is unworthy of a man to serve riches, for they are dirt and dust. If our heart attaches itself to earthly things, it becomes coarse and earthly, and we become estranged from God, the Mother of God, all the saints, everything spiritual, heavenly, and eternal, and from love for our neighbor. Earthly things bind us to that which is earthly, perishable, and temporal. In conclusion, it must be added that the spirit of attachment to earthly things, of hoarding and grudging earthly things, is the spirit of the devil, and the devil himself dwells in the person who is attached to earthly things. Through some momentary attachment to earthly things not immediately renounced, he often enters into our heart as an insolent conqueror, darkening, crushing, and deadening our soul, making it incapable of any work for God, infecting it with pride, blasphemy,

complaining, contempt for holy things and other people, antagonism, despondency, despair, and malice.

* * *

For our sake was the Lord incarnate; for our sake He suffered, was crucified, died, and rose from the dead. For our sake He adorned His Mother, the most-pure Virgin Mary, with all virtues, and endued Her with all Divine powers, so that She, the most merciful and the most perfect, should be everything to us after only Himself. Therefore, let not God's grace, with which Our Lady is imbued, become fruitless for us. Let us all come with boldness and trust to the Virgin's wonderful, ever-helpful, and most-pure protection. If sins trouble us, let us pray to Her, that She may cleanse us with the hyssop of Her prayers from every impurity of flesh and spirit.

* * *

What is the cause of blasphemy and contempt for the spiritual word? The pride of our heart, the arrogance of our mind.

* * *

You constantly notice that God does not tolerate the slightest momentary impurity in you, and that peace and God Himself leave you immediately after the admittance of any impure thought into your heart. You become the abode of the devil if you do not immediately renounce the sin. Therefore, at every sinful thought, and still more at every sinful word and deed, we must say, "this is the devil." On the other hand, at every holy and good thought, word, and deed, we should say, "this is God," or "this comes from God." Imagine, therefore, what a resplendently adorned, pure, and unshakeable Palace of the Almighty must the most-holy soul and the most-pure body of the Mother of God have been, for in Her womb God the Word came to dwell in His most-pure Soul and Body! Imagine what eternal, infinite, unchangeable holiness She is! Of what endless reverence and glorification is She worthy! We, on the other hand, are "*a reed shaken by the* [the devil's] *wind*" (Matt 11:7). The devil breathes his blasphemy into our hearts, and we are immediately shaken with it. We are disturbed, depressed, when we

should instead despise all his blasphemies, or not pay any attention to them, looking at them as a delusion.

* * *

In the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are undivided. In the same way, in our prayer and life our thought, word, and deed should also be undivided. If you ask anything of God, believe that it will be done as you request, if God pleases. If you read the Word of God, believe that everything you read was, is, and shall be. Believe thus, speak thus, read thus, and pray thus. Great is the Word; great is the reasoning, speaking, and active soul, the image and likeness of the Almighty Trinity. Man, know yourself! Know what you are, and conduct yourself with dignity.

* * *

O Merciful Lady! Ever manifest and reveal Your power in me, and in all Your people who are God-fearing and virtuous, by delivering us, according to our prayer, from impure, cunning, and blasphemous thoughts, from all our sins and passions, and from the snares of the devil, for You are the merciful Mother of God.

* * *

Pray to Our Lady the Theotokos, to the angels, and to all the saints as you would pray to the Holy Spirit Himself. Even more so, pray to them as you would pray to the Holy Trinity, Who sanctifies them and abides in them. "*That they also may be one in Us*" (John 17:21). "*For Thou art holy, our God, and restest in the saints.*"[6] Amen.

* * *

We all live in a kind of delusional darkness of the heart and mind, but the Lord Jesus Christ is our enlightenment. The saints always see us, by the grace of God, because they are in God, and God is in them. They are one spirit with the Lord (1 Cor 6:17), and the Lord sees everything, hears everything. Therefore, when, for instance, in church you look at the images

of God’s saints, believe that they see you, and, above all, that they see your heart.

* * *

No matter what passions the enemies use to attack you, endure them all without falling into despondency, without anger, meekly and humbly, and do not allow a single movement of impatience, malice, complaining, and blasphemy to appear in your heart.

* * *

All of creation is a witness to the infinite mercy and righteousness of the Creator; even Satan himself and his angels prove the immeasurable mercy and righteousness of the Creator by their shameful existence and malicious snares against humanity. For who were Satan and his angels in the beginning? What lights, what treasuries of blessings did they lose by their voluntary ingratitude, pride, malice, and envy against the Lord? Did they not fall quite deliberately, intentionally, with the purpose of eternally waging war against the Creator and His creatures, reasonable beings endowed with speech? Judging by Satan’s malicious actions in the world, by their number and power, we can guess how powerful a spirit was Satan, the fallen angel. Judging by his great darkness and his manifold delusions scattered throughout the whole world (“*Who deceives the whole world*” [Rev 12:9]), we can guess how bright and full of truth he originally was. “*You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering*” (Ezek 28:13). Judging by the most evil, carnal, and impure desires suggested by him, we may conclude how beloved and perfect he was in the time of his goodness! Judging by his cunning and wicked wiles, we may guess how wise he was, and how much good he might have done, what great service he might have accomplished for his Creator, in His providence for the lesser spirits of men. From this enormous colossus of evil, Satan, we may guess what a great, good, beautiful, bright, powerful, wise creature Satan previously was. How many gifts of the Creator’s goodness were gathered in him, and of how much was he deprived by his wicked and intentional madness! By his malice, manifested in men, judge how good he was previously. By his envy, judge of his previous goodwill. By the boundless greed and avarice he excites in men, judge of his previous

generosity. By his pride, of the greatness he received from God. By the despondency, weariness, and sometimes unbearable anguish he inspires in men, judge of his former blessedness. For he was previously as good as he is now evil! He offers an eternal lesson for humility and obedience to all the heavenly angels and to all wise human beings, for however perfect the angels are, and however wise, and however perfect people may appear in some things, they have received everything from the goodness of the Creator alone, and not of themselves. Therefore, they must thank the Creator for everything and pray to Him for everything with undoubting faith in His goodness and omnipotence, with the hope of receiving everything from Him. The evil spirits fell through pride and malice—there is a lesson for all men in this. The lesson is this: to humble themselves before their Creator, to consider themselves as nothing, to ascribe everything to the Creator, and to live solely by the Creator and by fulfilling His will. And (how wonderful are Thy works, O Lord!) that which Satan was not able and did not desire to attain, with all his wisdom, was attained by the Virgin from a perishable but spiritually immortal race. The most-holy Virgin Mary attained humility without compare, the highest holiness. "*Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you*" (Luke 1:28). "*For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant*" (Luke 1:48). Likewise, all of us, being insignificant, must constantly and deeply humble ourselves before the Creator, having recourse in everything to His mercy.

* * *

You cannot conquer any passion, any sin without the help of grace. Therefore, always ask the help of Christ, your Saviour. It was for this that He came into the world, for this that He suffered, died, and rose from the dead, in order to help us in everything, to save us from sin and from violence of the passions, to cleanse us from our sins, to bestow on us power in the Holy Spirit to do good works, to enlighten us, to strengthen us, to give us peace. You ask how you can save yourself when you sin at every step you take? There is a simple answer to this: at every step, at every moment, call upon the Saviour, remember the Saviour, and you will save yourself and others.

* * *

Avail yourself of My gifts, not separately, as lovers of self, but as My children who should have everything in common, not grudging, but freely giving to others the fruits of the work of My hands, remembering that I gave them freely to you, according to My fatherly goodness and man-loving generosity. So it is in a family. When a father, mother, or brother brings presents, he gives them to all his children, and if the children, the brothers and sisters, live in mutual love, then they do not feel completely happy or satisfied if their father or brother forgets about one of their siblings, or has not given one of their siblings as good a gift as he has given to others. Why is this? Because, through their mutual love, they feel as one body, because they are all like a single person. Each one of you should act in the same way. I know how to reward you for this kind of love, which is so pleasing to Me. If I am generous even to those who do not fulfill My commandments —"*The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully*" (Luke 12:16)— then shall I not be generous to My true children, for whom I have duly predestined all of My gifts? Truly, I will! "*I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion*" (Rom 9:15; Exod 33:19).

* * *

"If you fall, rise and you shall be saved." You are a sinner, you continually fall, learn also how to rise; work hard to acquire this wisdom. This wisdom consists in learning by heart the Psalm, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy great goodness," inspired by the Holy Spirit, written down by the king and prophet David. Speak it with sincere faith and trust, with a contrite and humble heart. After your sincere repentance, expressed in the words of King David, forgiveness of your sins will immediately shine down on you from the Lord, and your spiritual powers will be at peace. The most important thing in life is to be zealous for mutual love, and not to judge anyone. Everybody shall answer for himself before God, and you must look to yourself. Beware of anger.

* * *

Orthodox Christians are like a family, the children of Jesus Christ, and in a good family the mother is always held in high esteem (the Mother of God), likewise the elder brothers command the respect, esteem, and

emulation of the younger ones. Lutherans and Anglicans! Why is it not so with you? Why is not the Mother of God duly revered and solemnly honored and worshipped by you as well? Why do you not solemnly honor and worship the holy angels and God's saints? Why do you not wish to imitate them? Or is it that you honor God alone, and worship Him only? But you should remember that the Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ, the holy angels, and the saints are pure images of God—friends of God, as Abraham is called in Scripture. How can you, then, not worship the living images of God, the children and friends of God?

* * *

The world is like a house. The Builder and the Master of this house, the Creator and Father of the Christians living in it, is God. The Mother in this house is the most-holy Mother of the Lord. Always walk in the presence of your Father, in love and obedience to Him; likewise, walk in the presence of our common Mother, the most-holy Theotokos, in holy love, reverence, and obedience to Her. In your bodily and spiritual needs, in your sorrows, misfortunes, and sicknesses, turn to Her with faith, hope, and love. Be holy, as the Lord God your Creator and Father is holy, as Our Lady, the Mother of God (and your Mother, too, according to the Saviour's words, "*Woman, behold your Son; … behold your Mother*") (John 19:26, 27). Lest we doubt our right to call the most exalted Mother of the Most-High God our own Mother, Her Eternal, Divine Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, has directly allowed us, or those of us who are zealous after holiness, to call Her our Mother: "*Behold your Mother.*" For, in the person of St John the Divine, He says this to all Christians. Indeed, she is our most tender, most provident holy Mother, guiding us, Her children, to holiness.

* * *

You see very clearly that it is extremely difficult for you to change for the better. In fact, without God's grace and your own fervent prayer and abstinence, it would be impossible. You feel within yourself the activity of a multitude of passions: pride, anger, envy, greed, love of money, despondency, slothfulness, fornication, impatience, and disobedience; and yet, you remain mired in them, repeatedly bound by them, while the long-suffering Lord patiently awaits your return and amendment; and still, He

bestows on you all the gifts of His mercy. Therefore, you should also be indulgent, patient, and loving to those who live with you, and who also suffer from many passions. Conquer every evil with good, and, above all, pray to God for them, that He may correct them, that He may turn their hearts to Himself, the source of holiness. Do not help the devil to spread his kingdom. Hallow the name of your Heavenly Father by your actions; help Him to spread His Kingdom on earth. "*For we are God's fellow workers*" (1 Cor 3:9). Be zealous for the fulfillment of His will on earth, as it is in heaven. Forgive them that trespass against you with joy, as a good son rejoices when he has a chance of fulfilling the will of his beloved father.

* * *

What pleasure and joy you feel when you find some necessary and valuable object which you had lost! You are ready to leap with joy. Picture to yourself how pleasing to the Heavenly Father is the sight of His lost child, the sinner who is found; the sight of His lost sheep brought to life again; the sight of His lost and found piece of silver, that is, the living image of God—man. It is impossible to describe this joy. The joy of the Heavenly Father over His prodigal son who was lost and found again is so great that all of heaven is moved to joy. "*There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents*" (Luke 15:7). My lost brothers and sisters! Return from the way of destruction to the Heavenly Father. "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt 3:2).

* * *

Every person should know and remember the simplicity of his soul, which is the breath of God. God is simple, and the soul is simple. And since the soul is simple, it cannot love two opposite subjects—God and anything worldly, man and anything material that is pleasing to our carnal man. In order to love God with all our heart, we must absolutely count everything earthly as nothing and not be enticed by any thing; in order to love our neighbor as ourselves, we must disdain money and not be distracted by any food, dress, distinctions, rank, praises, or human opinion. We must especially guard the simplicity of the soul during public worship and prayer at home, when we read the Word of God and the writings of the Holy

Fathers, and during every important matter. “*No one can serve two masters*” (Matt 6:24).

* * *

A Christian should love God, and his neighbor, the image of God, so fervently and deeply that he will always be able to say: “*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ [and of our neighbor]? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword*” (Rom 8:35), or money, or the sweetness of food and drink, or a luxurious dwelling, or cares about dress, or various worldly pleasures? But I count all these earthly things as nothing, and worldly pleasures as no more than a dream. I ascribe the faults of my neighbor to the corruption of nature, to the actions and wiles of evil spirits, to insufficient or bad education, to the unfavorable conditions of life, to the quality of their parents and tutors. Knowing my own sinfulness, my own malice, greed, impurity, my own infirmity, I cannot hate men like myself, having the same weakness and vices. I should love my neighbor as myself, and I love myself, although I know myself to be guilty of countless sins. Finally, I should love them because we are all one body.

* * *

Bear in mind that if you cleanse your heart from sins, you will obtain an eternal reward—you will see God, your most gracious Creator, your Providence. The work of cleansing the heart is difficult, because it is connected with great privation and sorrow. Therefore, the reward is great. “*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God*” (Matt 5:8).

* * *

People say that God is merciful; He will forgive our sins. Certainly, God is infinitely merciful. But if He is infinitely merciful and generous to us, then why do we voluntarily offend Him with our sins? The more He loads us with benefits, the more we should love Him and be grateful to Him, the more we should obey His holy commandments. But where is this love, this gratitude, this obedience?

* * *

A malicious, proud man is ready to see only malice and pride in others, and he is glad when any of his acquaintances, especially those who live happily and richly, but are not dear to his soul, are badly spoken of by others. The worse the rumor, the more he rejoices. He himself is of course perfection compared to them! He is ready to perceive only evil in them, and to compare them to demons. O malice! O pride! O lack of love! No, even in the malicious you must seek something good and rejoice at finding this good and speak joyfully of his good qualities. There is nobody in whom there is not some little good. Cover the evil that is in him with good, and pray to God for him, that God may "*make the evil be good in His benevolence.*"[7] Do not be yourself an abyss of evil.

* * *

Christian! Remember that Christ, the Founder of your faith, was crucified on the cross and left you the cross. Why, then, do you live in luxury, in comfort, in indulgence, in idleness? He suffered dishonor and commanded you not to shun dishonor for the sake of His name; instead, you seek honor. Gaze more often upon the Crucified Lord and remember your duties. "*And those who are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its passions and desires*" (Gal 5:24).

* * *

"*But not a hair of your head shall be lost*" (Luke 21:18); that is, not a single holy thought of your mind shall be lost, not only for God, but also for people. For we see that the holy thoughts and feelings of God's saints have been preserved to us in their entirety, having been written down.

* * *

Who is the cause of everything visible and invisible? God. God is invisible. Worship the invisible God. Yearn after the invisible God. God is an eternal, All-holy, Most-gracious, Omniscient, Almighty, Righteous, Omnipresent, Unchangeable, Blessed Spirit; and you are the image of God. Therefore, be spiritual, despising the flesh, which is only your temporal

home. Be holy, kind, wise, just, watchful, and courageous, unchangeable in good, and satisfied with everything.

* * *

He who has built himself a house, by every right should live in it. We are the houses of our Creator; He has created us for Himself, for He "has done all things for His own sake." He should dwell in us, not the devil, the murderer, thief, predator, deceiver. "*Come and dwell in us."*[8] "*We will come to him and make Our home with him*" (John 14:23). "*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* (1 Cor 3:16).

* * *

Revere every word, every thought of the Word of God, of the writings of the Holy Fathers, and the various prayers and hymns which we hear in church or which we read at home, because they are all the breath and speech of the Holy Spirit. It is the "*Holy Spirit Himself*" Who "*makes intercession for us,*" and through us, "*with groanings which cannot be uttered*" (Rom 8:26).

* * *

The great litany daily intoned in the Orthodox Church is a most-wise litany, a litany of love. In it, both living Christians and the saints are represented as fellow members of the Body of Jesus Christ. It finishes most beautifully with the following exclamation: "Calling to remembrance our Most-holy, Most-pure, Most-blessed, glorious Lady Theotokos and Ever - Virgin Mary, together with all the saints, let us commit ourselves and one another and all our life unto Christ our God." The augmented litany and the litany of supplication are also beautiful. We have grown accustomed to them, but let us imagine that we hear them for the first time. Let us put ourselves in the position of foreigners.[9]

* * *

When praying to God, we must always call to mind His infinite greatness, how He is worshiped by thousands upon thousands and millions upon millions of angels in Heaven and saints. We must also remember His omnipresence and omniscience, His infinite mercy, righteousness, and holiness. When you call upon the most-holy Virgin Mother of God in prayer, Her that is most holy, most pure, most spotless, most blessed, remember that Her very being is holiness eternal, immovable, unchangeable, unimaginable, "*depth indiscernable even for the eyes of angels.*"[10] The same is true of all the angels and saints—that is, their being is holiness and goodness, by the grace of Jesus Christ. Always consider it a great happiness to be able to pray to the Lord, or His most-pure Mother, or the angels and saints, and pray to them with joy and trembling reverence, remembering with Whom you are speaking, you who are an impure and insignificant worm.

* * *

"For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory," not ours. We of course would like to reign over the world, together with our passions, to order everything as we like, to trust to our own power, not Yours, to seek our own glory, and not Yours. But this is the devil's wish in us. We should submit everything to Your will, commit in all matters to Your power, and do everything for Your glory. "*Do all to the glory of God*" (1 Cor 10:31).

* * *

Through the cross and the sign of the cross, the Lord Jesus Christ is ever with us, living and giving life. He acts through different powers for our salvation and through our faith in Him, our God and Saviour. Glory to our Lord, who is ever present with us! "*I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen*" (Matt 28:20).

* * *

Communicants of the Divine Mysteries! Do you realize how completely you become united to the Lord if you commune worthily? What boldness you have toward the Lord and toward the Mother of God! What purity you should have! What meekness, humility, gentleness! What detachment from

everything earthly! What a burning desire for heavenly, most pure, eternal joys!

* * *

In making the sign of the cross, believe and constantly remember that your sins are nailed to the cross. When you fall into sin, immediately condemn yourself sincerely, and make the sign of the cross over yourself, saying: "Lord, You Who nailed our sins to the cross, nail also my present sin to Your cross, and '*have mercy upon me, O God, after Thy great goodness*'" (Psalm 50:3); and you will be cleansed from your sin. Amen.

* * *

All possible sins and passions are ready to break into the soul, and they strive to do so at every moment. But fight against them valiantly and vigilantly unto your last breath, considering them as delusions of your imagination, as illusions of the spirits of evil.

* * *

You should be so sure of the Lord's presence near when praying, that you should come into contact Him not only with your thought and heart, but also with your mouth and words. "*The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart*" (Rom 10:8); that is God.

* * *

Let the following conviction be inherent in your heart: all we men are one (brothers), and God, the Most-merciful, Almighty, Inexhaustible Source of all things, is everything to us all. But in all of us the devil, the enemy of mankind, can and does act. His wickedness, working in people, must be conquered by good, patience, meekness, indulgence.

* * *

Do not confuse man, the image of God, with the wickedness that is in him, because the wickedness is only accidental. It is his misfortune,

sickness, an illusion of the devil, but his being—the image of God—still remains in him.

* * *

If you sin in any way before God (and we sin every day greatly!), immediately speak in your heart, with faith in the Lord, who hears the sobs of your heart, humbly acknowledging your sins, the words of the Psalm: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy great mercy." Pray the entire Psalm with your whole heart. If it does not take effect the first time, try again, only speak it with even more compunction and feeling, and then salvation and peace of soul shall speedily shine upon you from the Lord. Thus, be always contrite. This is the true, proved remedy against sins. If still you do not obtain relief, blame yourself. It shows that you have prayed without contrition, without humility of heart, without a strong desire to obtain forgiveness of sins from God. It shows that you are not deeply grieved at your sin.

* * *

If I have sinned, the Lord is my cleansing. If I am despondent or gloomy after sinning, or after being attacked by the enemy, the Lord does away with my despondency and revives my boldness. The Lord is everything to me. O Lord, our True master, glory to Thee!

* * *

The Holy Spirit, like air, fills everything and interpenetrates all things: "*Who art everywhere present and fillest all things.*"[11] Those who pray fervently attract the Holy Spirit to them, and pray through the Holy Spirit.

* * *

"*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them*" (Matt 18:20). Why is the Lord's presence preeminently promised to two or three? Because wherever two or three people are gathered in the name of Christ, this is the Church, the union of faith and

love. There is mutual love. "*By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*" (John 13:35).

* * *

Everything true in our thoughts is the breath of the Holy Spirit. Truth is as simple, easy, and life-giving for man as thought, as breath.

* * *

Believe and have hope that as easy it is for you to breathe or to eat and drink, it is even easier for your faith to receive spiritual gifts from the Lord. Prayer is the breath of the soul; prayer is our spiritual food and drink.

* * *

O pastor of men, the Lord has allowed you to see how cruel the spiritual wolf is, so that, among other reasons, you should strenuously endeavor to save both yourself and the flock entrusted to you by God from his claws and maw. Therefore, from this moment, begin to teach them with especial power, as the Lord Himself taught us, and show them how unceasingly this wolf hunts and catches them. Show them how he flatters their senses so that they might sin more easily and willingly, how many do not understand his flattery and serve him willingly—for instance, by gluttony, drunkenness, fornication, adultery, covetousness, pride, vanity, malice, envy, lack of respect for the, slothfulness, profane language, idle talk, mocking, a passion for dress, dancing, theaters, cards, etc.

* * *

We all take extra care for our elegant, clean clothing. We all try to dress with taste and elegance, but who thinks of the incorruptible clothing, which is all defiled with sins, in which we all shall have to appear before God the Judge? Who washes it with tears of repentance, with works of mercy? Who decorates it with fasting, prayer, vigilance, and contemplation of God?

* * *

"*We were glad all of our days; for the days wherein Thou didst humble us, the years wherein we saw adversity*" (Psalm 89:15). The merciful Lord, having punished us, forgives us afterward through His temporal and eternal mercy. Sometimes a sick person suffers a long time from his disease, as from a wicked tyrant. However, during this sickness, his soul is purified like gold; he obtains the freedom of God's children and is deemed worthy of eternal peace and blessedness.

* * *

Without testing it, even common iron appears to be steel, tin appears to be silver, bronze appears to be gold, and common glass seems to be diamond. Only testing the metal can prove its real worth. It is the same with people. Judging by appearances, many seem meek, humble, merciful, kind, simple, chaste, faithful, etc., but trials often prove that they are instead evil, proud, hard-hearted, impure, avaricious, greedy, envious, malicious, lazy, etc. People are tested through various privations and losses, sorrows, sicknesses, dishonor. Those who withstand the test are fit for the kingdom of God, while those who do not are unfit, because a significant admixture of evil remains in them.

* * *

Live as members of one body, as children of God, in love and harmony, in peace and calm, esteeming one another, forgiving one another, as the Lord forgives us. Do not be proud, do not envy, do not hold grudges. Subdue all carnal desires, preserve chastity, abstain from every superfluity, do not be slothful in prayer, begin every worldly work or undertaking with a short prayer, begin and end the day with fervent prayer to God, to our heavenly Lady, and to your guardian angel. Pray for everyone as you pray for yourself. Wish everyone well, as you wish yourself well, and do not wish or do evil to anyone.

* * *

When you see people fall into various sins against you, against the Lord, against their neighbors, and against themselves, do not be angry with them. There is much anger and malice in the world without your anger. Instead,

pity them with your whole soul and excuse them when they offend you, saying to yourself: "*Father, forgive them,*" for sin perplexes them. "*They do not know what they do*" (Luke 23:34).

* * *

When the heart becomes attached to anything earthly or material, it loses its peace. Sorrow, constraint, and death to our soul inevitably follow, for by itself our body is corruption, dust, and smoke. The only things our souls require are righteousness, holiness, truth, love, mercy, meekness, kindness, peace, spiritual freedom, and the grace of God in our hearts. These treasures give life to our whole being, for they are eternal. Let us strive with all our might to acquire them, and having acquired them, let us preserve, increase, and strengthen them in ourselves. Otherwise, through our sinfulness every good will soon evaporate.

* * *

O Lord! Give me always a meek heart, a bright, straightforward, and kind gaze. Grant it, Lord! Glory to You for the change accomplished in me by Your right hand. I thank You for taking away from me the burning thorns of my passions, my constraint, my shame, and my infirmities, and for having bestowed on me peace, consolation, freedom, power, and boldness. Strengthen in me that which You have accomplished in me. Glory to the power of faith, to the power of prayer, for everything that I ask of You with faith, I receive, according to Your Word (Mark 11:24). I thank You for raising me from the dead so many times (2 Cor 1:9), and for destroying the kingdom of death and sin within me.

* * *

A Christian must have a mind inclined upward, toward heaven where Christ is, and not cling to the corruptible blessings of the world—this is the concern of the pagan. But instead we attach ourselves passionately to all earthly pleasures and things. We have perverted our life by withdrawing ourselves from the examples given us by the Lord, the apostles, martyrs, holy fathers, the unmercenaries, and all the saints. They were not of this world, but we are of this world. We lead a selfish, not a Christian life. Envy,

pride, condemnation of others, enmity, hatred, anger, lies, carnal impurity are not banished from our hearts, but are firmly established in them.

* * *

Do not for a single moment pursue your own will, but instead fulfill the will of God, which is love for all (even for our enemies) and holiness. Our will is nothing less than different kinds of sin—self-love, anger, hatred, pride, envy, sensuality, gluttony, drunkenness, theft, covetousness, fornication, cunning, slothfulness, hardness of heart, insensibility to our neighbors' sufferings, joy in their misfortunes, malice, complaining, blasphemy.

* * *

How wondrous are these words: "*And grant unto us that with one mouth and one heart we may glorify and hymn Thy most honorable and majestic name: of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit….*"[12] O, that it were always so, and that our hearts were not apart, not even from those of other men, but even from our own selves!

* * *

If I despise or hate anybody, it means that I unlawfully exalt and love myself and my flesh. Our heart continually flatters us, secretly exalting ourselves and putting others down. But we must constantly see our countless sins in order to condemn ourselves as those already dead spiritually. Then we shall not have time to notice the faults of others, to condemn our neighbors, or to despise them. Instead, we shall esteem them, for we shall find that they are incomparably better than we are in many things.

* * *

Truly, the Church is heaven on earth, for where the throne of God is, where the awesome mysteries are celebrated, where the angels serve together with men, where the Almighty is unceasingly glorified, there heaven truly is, the heaven of heavens. Therefore, let us enter into the

Church of God, and above all, into the Holy of Holies, with the fear of God, with a pure heart, laying aside all passions and every worldly care. Let us stand in church with faith and reverence, with attentiveness, with love and peace in our hearts, so that we may come away renewed, as though made heavenly. Then we may begin to live in the holiness natural to heaven, not becoming bound by worldly desires and pleasures.

* * *

Fasting is a good teacher: (1) It soon makes the faster understand that a human being requires very little food and drink, and that in general we are greedy and eat a great deal more than is necessary (i.e., more than our nature requires). (2) Fasting clearly reveals all the infirmities of our soul, all its weaknesses, deficiencies, sins, and passions, like muddy, standing water, when cleaned, reveals all sorts of reptiles and dirt. (3) It shows us the necessity of turning to God with our whole heart, seeking His mercy, help, and salvation. (4) Fasting shows all the craftiness, cunning, and malice of the bodiless spirits, whom we have hitherto unwittingly served, and whose cunning, now that we are enlightened by the light of God's grace, becomes clear. Now they maliciously persecute us for having left their ways.

* * *

All natural bodies gravitate toward the center of the earth, and all human souls naturally yearn after their spiritual Center or Prototype—God. However, sin has perverted, and still perverts, this natural tendency. Fire and smoke gravitate toward the elements similar to them.

* * *

Your soul seeks true life and proper food. Food for the mind is truth; food for the heart is peace and blessedness; food for the will is proper direction or lawfulness. Go to church; she[13] will give you all this in abundance. She possesses all this in excess. She is "*the pillar and ground of the truth*" (1 Tim 3:15), because in her is the Word of God, which reveals to us the origin of all things, the creation of man in the image and likeness of God, his fall, his restoration through the Saviour of men, his salvation, faith, hope, and love. She gives us peace and blessedness through her divine services, and

especially through the sacraments. She calls to us: "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matt 11:28). She teaches us the true way, which our will should follow without deviation. She will lead us to eternal life by the way of God's commandments.

* * *

The Lord has given me the greatest gift, which cannot be taken away—His image and likeness. He has given me Himself. We hear at the services: "*Thou, O Lord, … hast given an inheritance unto those that fear Thy name!*"[14] What earthly riches can I possibly want after this? What honors? There is no higher honor than to be a Christian, a member of the Body of Christ, a child of God in Christ. There is no one richer than the man who always bears Christ and His grace in his heart. "*For what have I in heaven, and have I desired upon earth from Thee? My flesh and my heart have failed, O God of my heart, but Thou art my portion, O God, for ever*" (Psalm 72:25, 26). And yet, we are greedy, covetous, avaricious, proud, envious. What delusion, what foolishness! Man! Be rich in God; everything comes to you from God.

* * *

When you look at the candles and oil lamps burning in church, raise your thoughts from the material fire to the immaterial fire of the Holy Spirit, "*for our God is a consuming fire*" (Heb 12:29). When you see and smell the fragrant incense, raise your thoughts to the spiritual fragrance of the Holy Spirit, "*for we are to God the fragrance of Christ*" (2 Cor 2:15). At the same time, think also of the spiritual stench of sin, and endeavor to be filled with the fire of the Holy Spirit. Drive away every coldness of heart, which proceeds from the devil, the flesh, and the world, and become a sweet savor before God, by the fragrance of the virtues of meekness, gentleness, humility, obedience, abstinence, chastity, patience, and others. Flee from the stench of the passions—malice, envy, pride, disobedience, intemperance, fornication, etc.

* * *

The sound of the church readings, hymns, prayers, and supplications is the sound of our own souls exclaiming our spiritual need. It is the voice of all mankind sensing its poverty, its accursedness, its sinfulness, its need for a Saviour, its gratitude and praise for the countless benefits and the infinite perfections of God. Wonderfully beautiful are these prayers and hymns; they are the breath of the Holy Spirit!

* * *

The sign of the cross given as a blessing from a priest or a bishop is an expression of the blessing and favor of God to a human being in Christ, for Christ's sake. What a joyful, significant, and precious symbol this is! Blessed are all who receive such a blessing with faith! How attentive should the priests themselves be in giving their blessing upon the faithful! "*So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them*" (Num 6:27).

* * *

Do we pray in vain when we repeat the Trisagion and other morning and evening prayers several times during the day? Are we not cleansed by them from our sins and impurities? Are we not delivered from temptations, misfortunes, and unfavorable circumstances? Do we cross ourselves in vain? O, no! The cross benefits us and those who make the sign of the cross with faith, especially when we receive the blessing of a priest. Therefore, let us continually praise the mercy and power of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hears and saves us, unworthy ones, by His mercy, for His Holy Name's sake.

* * *

All the words of the Church prayers are important, but these words: "*For Thou art the resurrection and the life, and the repose,*"[15] which give such consolation to our mortal race and constitute the hope of the Christian, are especially wonderful. Therefore, they must be pronounced with special power, with special emphasis.

* * *

O holy faith! With what words or hymns can I sufficiently praise you for the countless blessings that you have given my soul and body? How can I praise all the miracles that you have accomplished, and still accomplish, in me? How can I be sufficiently grateful for the blessing of peace, the removal of distress, the blessings of freedom, the end of inner constraint, the gift of spiritual light, the dispersal of the darkness of the passions, the blessing of boldness, the destruction of faint-heartedness and fear, the blessing of spiritual power and spiritual largesse, deliverance from spiritual slavery and mean-spiritedness, the blessing of holiness, the end of sinful impurity, deliverance from malice, envy, self-will, obstinacy, avarice, fornication, and every spiritual corruption? Glory to You, my Lord God, my Benefactor, unto ages of ages! O Lord, May You become known in Your faithful by all the people of the earth, so that they may glorify You with one heart and one mouth, from east to west! So be it! So be it!

* * *

Doctors with large practices who receive a great deal of money from sick people should, for the sake of their souls, give alms generously, if they believe that they have an immortal soul. Rich priests who are generously rewarded for their prayers and spiritual labors should also give alms freely, to avoid being condemned with Judas, the betrayer, who sold the Lord of Glory for thirty pieces of silver. Merchants who make large profits should absolutely give alms and be generous in adorning God’s churches. Officials who receive large salaries should not consider the rich recompense given them in return for their work as their exclusive property, but should remember their poorer brothers, so that they may obtain a reward from God and purify their souls. All people should adorn themselves with the holy oil of charity and good works, lest they appear empty-handed before the Judge on the day of the terrible trial, lest they appear naked and bereft of virtue on the day when all hearts shall be examined.

* * *

I thank my all-holy, all-merciful, and most-wise Mother, the Church of God, for guiding me to salvation during this temporal life and for preparing me for citizenship in heaven. I thank her for all her prayers, the divine services, the sacraments, and rites. I thank her for the fasts so beneficial to

my soul and body (for through them I become healthy both in spirit and body, calm, vigilant, and light, while without them I feel extreme heaviness). I thank my spotless Mother the Church of Christ for entrancing me with her heavenly services, transporting my spirit to heaven, enlightening my intellect with heavenly truth, showing me the way to eternal life, delivering me from the violence and ignominy of the passions, making my life blessed.

* * *

The whole world—heaven and earth, and all that is in them, the sea, and all that is therein—is the outpouring of God's infinite mercy, wisdom, infinite power and might, and goodness to the creatures that He has created for joy and happiness, especially the human race. The world is the mirror of the goodness, mind, wisdom, and power of God. Therefore, we must not cling to the world, but to God. "*For what have I in heaven, and have I desired upon earth from Thee? My flesh and my heart have failed, O God of my heart, but Thou art my portion, O God, for ever*" (Psalm 72:25, 26).

* * *

It is necessary for a Christian to fast in order to clear his mind, rouse and develop his feelings, and stimulate his will to useful activity. We darken and stifle these three human abilities above all by "*carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life*" (Luke 21:34). Through these, we fall away from God, the Source of life, into corruption and vanity, perverting and defiling the image of God within us. Overeating and sensuality nail us to the earth and cut off, so to speak, the wings of our soul. But see how high is the flight of the souls of the ascetics and abstinent! They soar in the heavens like eagles; they, the earth-born, live with their mind and heart in heaven. There, they heard unutterable words and learned Divine wisdom. How a man lowers himself by gluttony and drunkenness! He perverts his nature, created in the image of God, and becomes like a beast, or even worse than a beast. O, woe is us for our attachments, for our sinful habits! They hinder us from loving God and our neighbors; they prevent us from fulfilling God's commandments; they ingrain in us unlawful, carnal self-love, the end of which is eternal death. Thus, the drunkard does not begrudge money for the sake of gratifying his flesh and stupefying himself, but he refuses to give a few

pennies to the poor. The smoker flings away tens and hundreds of rubles, and begrudges pennies to the poor, which might save his soul. Those who love fancy clothes, elegant furniture, or china spend enormous sums of money on these object, but walk past beggars coldly and contemptuously. Those who like sumptuous food do not begrudge spending tens and hundreds of rubles for dinners, but they begrudge a few pennies to the poor. It is also necessary for a Christian to fast because, after the Incarnation of the Son of God, human nature became spiritual, deified, and now we hasten toward the kingdom of God, which is "*not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Rom 14:17). "*Foods for the stomach, and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them*" (1 Cor 6:13). To eat and drink and care for the pleasures of the senses is only natural for pagans, who do not know spiritual, heavenly delights, and consider the entire purpose of their life to be the pleasures of the belly. This is why the Lord so often reproves this destructive passion in His Gospel. Why, therefore, do we darken and stifle our souls and kill their last spiritual powers?

* * *

Students in our schools learn many things, but they often do not know the one thing needful—God and themselves. They do not know their sins, their spiritual infirmities, their nothingness without God and before God. Remember the prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian: "Yea, My Lord and King! Grant me to see mine own transgressions." To see our sins in their fullness and in all their abomination is indeed a gift of God bestowed after fervent prayer. The same is also true of many learned, rich, and distinguished persons. They know much, they possess much, but often they neither know nor possess the essential. "*You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babes … Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight*" (Matt 11:25, 20, 26). Wonderful are Thy works! It is evident that the grace of God and the blessings of this world are not the same thing, and our attachment to them is incompatible with the grace of God.

* * *

Great is Your love, O Lord: You have emptied yourself, for the sake of Your love for me. I gaze at the cross and marvel at Your love for me and the world, for the cross is the clearest sign of Your love for us. "*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends*" (John 15:13). Your Life-giving Mysteries, O Lord, serve as constant, glorious proof of Your love for us sinners, for this Thy Divine Body was broken for me, and this Blood was poured out for me. Lord, I glorify the miracle of Your Holy Mysteries, manifested in Your faithful, to whom I have administered Them. I glorify the countless cures I witnesses. I glorify Their salvific action in myself. I glorify Your mercy to me, revealed to me in Them and through Them, and Your life-giving power acting through Them. O Lord! In return for Your great love, grant that I may love You with all my heart, and my neighbor as myself. Grant that I may also love my enemies, and not only those who love me.

* * *

O Lord! Teach us to live in mutual love, and strengthen this love in us through Your Holy Spirit. Subdue the storms of the passions, which hinder heavenly, evangelical love, and make our hearts dead to earthly delights. Grant, Lord, that I may ever prefer Your grace, Your peace, Your righteousness and holiness to all earthly blessings. Grant that I may abide in Your grace all the days of my life, until my last breath.

* * *

Lack of spiritual education, lack of development, softening, and amendment of the heart is a thousand times more blameworthy than lack of scholastic education, for an uneducated man deserves our indulgence and pity, but an educated man given up to the passions and vices (malice, pride, scorn, envy, gluttony, overeating, drunkenness, covetousness, fornication, and other passions), with all his knowledge, including the knowledge of the will of God, is a man whose heart is hardened, and man dead to God. He does not apply the principles he has learned to practice; he does not fulfill the will of God, but he transgresses it with even greater fearlessness and insolence than the uneducated. The uneducated man's simplicity of heart, meekness, gentleness, humility, silence, and patience are dearer to God than all our knowledge, all our external brilliance, all our studied expressions, all

our feigned courtesy, all our lengthy prayers, all our artful speeches. Even the sins of the uneducated are excusable, since they are sins of ignorance. Therefore, respect the simple and uneducated, and learn from them all that which the so-called educated do not have—simplicity, gentleness, patience, and other virtues. The uneducated are babes in Christ, to whom the Lord sometimes reveals His mysteries.

* * *

"*They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world*" (John 17:16). These are the words of Jesus Christ concerning the Apostles. These are words of great praise. Why is this quality so worthy of praise? The Apostles, living in the world, were nonetheless strangers to it, strangers to its attachments. They sought in it neither glory nor riches, neither happiness nor tranquility, but were like beings of another, heavenly world. They contemplated and cared for heavenly things; they sought after incorruptible, heavenly glory riches, joys and rest in God, through union with Him. But we sinners are of this world, because we seek the glory of this world, material riches, health, length of life, enjoyment of the blessings of this world, earthly tranquility, earthly joys. But all our misfortunes, passions, temptations, and failure in the Christian life proceed from such attachment to the world and its goods.

* * *

Why is it necessary not only to pray at home, but also to go to church to attend divine services? Well, why is it necessary for you not only to eat and drink, but also to walk in the fresh air every day, to work every day? To maintain the life of the body and strengthen it. It is similarly necessary to pray in order to maintain and stimulate the life of the soul, to strengthen the soul, which is sick with sins, to cleanse it, just as you use certain kinds of food and drink to cleanse the body from impurities. Therefore, if you do not pray, then you behave most unwisely, and unadvisedly, because you maintain, gratify, and strengthen your body in every way, but you neglect your soul. But man is a dualistic creature, for he is made of soul and body.

* * *

It is better not to repeat words of reproach, but to keep silent concerning them. Better yet, speak words of love and good will, and our spirit will be calm. But to repeat words of animosity and envy is very damaging. Such words often produce, in the impatient and self-loving people to whom they are referred, a spiritual storm. These words can rekindle dormant anger and can become the cause of dissension. We must have Christian patience and the wisdom of serpents.

* * *

Why is it that one evil word, one word of slander, has the most disagreeable effect on us, agitating us to the very depths of our souls, while thousands of good words, such as those concerning God and His works in the world, sometimes fail to reach our hearts at all, dissipating in the air? The devil comes and snatches away the word sown in the hearts of men. It is also he who sows and tends in our hearts the seeds of evil, never missing the slightest opportunity of implanting enmity and envy for our neighbor in our hearts. A single glance, often quite innocent, but appearing suspicious to us, is enough to incite our enmity. Therefore, let us not take to heart any evil committed against us, whether intentionally or unintentionally, for we know the author of it, and that "*the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one*" (1 John 5:19) from its beginning. Instead, let us bear every affront serenely, praying for those who offend us, as for our benefactors, for even in their affronts we may sometimes hear words of good will, even if they don't proceed from a good heart. May the Lord teach them, and not impute their offense as a sin to them. Let us also be more careful never to give place to the devil.

* * *

In this life we sin continually, but we are so self-loving that we cannot endure our faults and sins to be reproved, especially before others. However, in the future life our transgressions will be revealed before the whole world. Remembering this terrible judgment seat, let us bear reproof here humbly and meekly, and let us correct all our faults and sins. Let us especially bear reproof from our superiors, and may the Lord teach them to reprove our faults not maliciously, but lovingly, in the spirit of meekness.

* * *

Love to be accused of sin by others, justly or unjustly in this life, otherwise you will be accused at the dread judgment seat, before the whole world, before all the angels and men. O, the unbearable fear and shame of Your terrible judgment seat, O Lord!

* * *

We must pity every evil man and not be angry with him, lest we gratify Satan. We must consider every enemy simply as God's creation, as one created in the image of God, and as our own member, and not breathe malice against him, lest we ourselves become devils, for everyone in a fit of rage becomes a devil himself. We must always be meek, gentle, kind-hearted, patient, as though we did not notice the anger of others. We must "*overcome … evil*" and wicked people "*with good*" (Rom 12:21), with kindness and gentleness. May God deliver us from evil suspicion, which interprets everything in our neighbor—his movements, gestures, look, voice, step, and every word—in the worst possible light.

* * *

I thank You, O Lord, for giving me new life every time I celebrate the Divine Liturgy and partake of Thy most-pure and life-giving Mysteries with tears of repentance and gratitude. I owe the continuation of my life until now, the purity of my ways, and my good repute among Your people exclusively to Your Holy Mysteries. May Thy great Name be glorified more and more in me and in all Your people. May they be called by Your great Name throughout the whole world. Thy kingdom come, the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, in all our hearts, as You have said, "*I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people*" (2 Cor 6:16,18; compare Lev 26:12; Jer 3:19). May Thy will, Thy holy, most-wise, all-good, most-perfect, and most-blessed will, be done on earth, in all Thy people, and in me, a sinner, as it is in heaven, for our own will is false, shortsighted, sinful, destructive, unloving, evil, envious, proud, slothful, luxury-loving, money-loving, and avaricious.

* * *

The insistence of a poor person's poverty sometimes forces him to become persistent, even shameless, when begging for alms. In the same way, our passions—fornication, malice, avarice, covetousness, envy, pride, theft, heresy, dissent, superstition, idolatry—are obstinate and persistent, insolent and shameless. Let us listen to the reasonably persistent requests of the needy and suffering; it will benefit our salvation and our eternal bliss. As the poor and suffering compel us to compassion, let us mutually compel each other to almsgiving. Let us force ourselves to do good works while there is still time, otherwise sin will compel us to actions that continually anger God, preparing us as food for the fires of Gehenna, which are already kindled, little by little, here in our hearts, foreshowing the eternal flame, where there shall be everlasting lamentation and gnashing of teeth. "*The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt 11:12). The enemy likewise endeavors to force into Gehenna all the imprudent, unbelieving, unrepentant, all those who are passionately attached to the blessings of this life.

* * *

Why do we observe a day of rest every six days? So that we may constantly remember that after the labors of this present life, the day of eternal rest will come, for according to the Apostle Paul, "*there remains therefore a rest for the people of God*" (Heb 4:9). Sunday foreshadows the day of the general resurrection, after which a day of rest shall come for all those who have done good work in this present life, in Christ Jesus.

* * *

Alms and charity to the poor cannot replace love for our neighbor if there is no love in the heart; therefore, when giving alms, we must be careful that we give with love, with a sincere heart, willingly, and not with a feeling of vexation against the poor. The very word *charity* suggests an act or an offering of the heart.[16] Therefore, we should give with feeling or pity for the unfortunate condition of the poor person, and with a sense of our sinfulness, because we give also for the cleansing of our sins: "*for almsgiving … will wash away every sin*" (Tob 12:9). He who bestows charity

unwillingly and with vexation does not recognize his sins. He has not learned to know himself. Charity is, first of all, a benefit to those who give.

* * *

"*Do not be overcome by evil* [i.e., your neighbor's], *but overcome evil with good*" (Rom 12:21), chiefly by praying for those who do evil to you. Let us commit ourselves and each other, and all our life, with all our defects, mutual offenses, unto Christ our God. Let us not exact vengeance on anyone, not with a single thought or intention, but let us leave vengeance to God. "*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord*" (Rom 12:19; compare Deut 32:35). We must love our enemies; it is the devil that teaches and incites them to enmity.

* * *

The theater lulls the Christian life to sleep, destroys it, substituting for it the life of a pagan. "*They all slumbered and slept*" (Matt 25:5). What else puts the Christian to fatal sleep? The sciences, taught in the spirit of paganism, worldly cares taken to an extreme, love of money, ambition, and sensuality. The theater is the school of this world and of its prince, the devil, but sometimes he is transformed into an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14) to more easily tempt people who are not discerning: he sometimes allows an apparently moral play to make it to the stage. Then everybody begins to exclaim that the theater is a most moral institution, and that no less worthy of attendance than the church, or even, perhaps, more so, because in church everything is always the same, but in the theater there is a variety of plays, scenery, costumes, and actors.

* * *

To see whether you love your neighbor according to the Gospel, pay attention to yourself when others offend you, abuse you, mock you, or do not give you the respect you think you deserve (or which society demands), or when your subordinates do negligent work and refuse to improve their performance. If you remain calm during such occasions, if you are not filled with the spirit of enmity, hatred, and impatience, if you continue to love these people as much as before, then you truly love your neighbor

according to the Gospel. However, if you become irritable, angry, and agitated, then you do not. "*If you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others?"* (Matt 5:47; compare Luke 6:32).

* * *

Since we are strangers, sojourners, pilgrims on the way to the heavenly kingdom, we must not burden ourselves with worldly cares, nor become attached to earthly blessings, riches, pleasures, or honors, lest these cares and attachments hinder us in the hour of death. The Christian, even here on earth, must accustom himself to live the heavenly life. He must fast, renounce the world, pray, love. He must exercise meekness, gentleness, patience, courage, and mercy. How heavy will be the hour of death to the man who dedicated his life to idols of money, food, drink, or earthly achievement! In that hour, none of these things shall serve him, while his heart, being strongly attached to them, will not possess the true treasure that would give him life—virtue. Therefore, in order to die more easily—and we will all die—we must not love anything in the world. "*And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content*" (1 Tim 6:8).

* * *

When I am in church, I am truly in an earthly heaven. Here I see the images of the Lord, the most-pure Mother of God, the holy angels. Here is God's throne, here is the Life-giving Cross, here is the eternal Gospel, the Word of God, by Whom all things were made. Here are the images of the saints. I feel myself in the visible presence of God, His Mother, the heavenly powers, and all the saints. This is truly heaven on earth: here I know that I am indeed a member of Christ and of His Church, especially during the celebration of the most heavenly Liturgy and the Communion of the Holy Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ. How must I live, think, feel, speak, in order to be worthy of this heaven on earth! I must become worthy of the priesthood, to which I am called by the grace of the generous God. How must I live! In what meekness, humility, purity, abstinence, in order to call the Theotokos *my* Lady and the Lord of Glory *my* Master! Lord, make me worthy to become such an abode! I desire to live as a Christian, but I find no power in myself to attain this. Sin unceasingly tempts and wars against my soul.

* * *

Pray without doubt, in the simplicity of your heart, to the Lord God, the angels and saints, who by the grace of God, through their union with God, and through the simplicity of their being, most speedily, with the quickness of lightning, both hear and fulfill our prayers according to the will of God.

* * *

To love God with all our heart means to reject all earthly attachment and to give the entire heart to the Lord God, fulfilling His Will (not our own) in everything. To love God with all the soul means to have the mind fixed upon Him at all times, to establish the heart in Him, and to submit the entire will to His Will in all circumstances of life, both joyful and sorrowful. To love God with all our strength means to love Him so that no opposing power, no circumstance of life, neither "*tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword*" (Rom 8:35, 38, 39) shall separate us from the love of God. To love God with all our understanding means always to think of God, His mercy, long suffering, holiness, wisdom, omnipotence, all His works, and to reject thoughts of vanity and from evil recollections. To love God means to love righteousness with all our soul and to hate iniquity, as it is written: "*Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity*" (Psalm 45:8). To love God means to hate oneself, to hate the old, carnal man: "*If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his … own life also, he cannot be My disciple*" (Luke 14:26; Matt 16:24). In our thoughts, hearts, and wills, a supernatural, evil power lives and acts, every day and every moment endeavoring to estrange us from God, suggesting sinful thoughts, desires, worries, intentions, actions, exciting the passions and forcibly instigating us to them, inspiring malice, envy, covetousness, pride, ambition, vanity, slothfulness, disobedience, obstinacy, deceit, and intemperance. To love God means to fulfill His commandments: "*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word…. He who does not love Me, does not keep My words*" (John 14:23, 24).

* * *

What a wealth of light, air, water, earth, and fire the Lord provides his creation! Of these five material elements, our body is formed, and by them

it lives. What a wealth of the plant life, and all this chiefly for the use of man, the king of creation! I thank you, our Creator! Glory to You, our Providence and our Redeemer, Who has created us in Your own image and likeness, and has deigned to take our nature upon Yourself!

* * *

What is the true wealth of a man? The image and likeness of God. Not lands or money. Not the various earthly sciences and arts. Not possessions, not many servants, or clothes, not a profusion of earthly blessings, for all these are corruptible and temporal. The soul, the image of God, is eternal, and its riches are virtue, holiness, humility, gentleness, temperance in all things, faith, hope, and love.

* * *

When I gaze in contemplation and faith at the holy icons and all the adornments of the church interior, then I am lost in wonderful contemplation: the whole temple appears to me to be sacred history in action, a wonderful scripture of the works of God, accomplished in the human race. Here I see the history of our fall and restoration by God's wonderful providence. I see our elevation by the Lord's Incarnation, our deification, and our exaltation into heaven. Here I see the painting of the Archangel Gabriel announcing the Birth of the Son of God to the Virgin. Here I see the Birth of the Child, God, the Virgin Mother, the manger at Bethlehem. Here is the Circumcision; there is the Baptism; further is the Meeting of the Lord God in the temple by Simeon. Here is the Transfiguration of our Lord and the light of Mt Tabor, there the Entrance into Jerusalem of the Saviour, the meek King. I see the Lord's Supper and the institution of the all-saving sacrament of the Holy Communion. There are the all-saving sufferings of the Lord of Glory; I see Golgotha itself and the Lord crucified for the sins of the world. I see the descent into hell of the Conqueror of hell and the deliverance of the captives of hell; I see His Resurrection, Ascension into heaven, all for the sake of mankind, and for my own sake. In the church, I am lost in Divine contemplation, and I thank the Lord for having so greatly loved me, for having so greatly honored and blessed me. But when I look within myself, into my own heart, my God, what do I see? I see an abyss of voluntary and involuntary sins, an abyss of

infirmities, temptations, constraint, sorrows, fears, snares of the enemy, impenetrable darkness, thousands of falls, thousands of destructions and deaths. Sometimes I see hell itself inside me.

* * *

The entire power, effectiveness, and cunning of the devil's temptations consist in the fact that he has enticed and entices, has incited and incites, people to love the world and that which is in it (e.g., vain earthly wisdom, riches, glory, distinctions, earthly delights) and to turn away from God, from the heavenly kingdom and its blessedness. He inspires people to love vain earthly things, to strive to invent and acquire as many of them as possible, and to despise the soul and its actual requirements. He suggests that we come to love the flesh, its health, color, beauty, carnal sensuality, and to hate the soul (i.e., virtue) and forget its immortality, its Prototype, God. We wants us never to even think of immortality and the way that leads to it, of God, and of union with Him. Blessed are the saints of God who despised the world and loved God, who despised the flesh and diligently cared for their souls, for that which is eternal. How pitiful, how accursed we are, we who love the world and its vain blessings, we who pamper the flesh and despise the soul!

* * *

If some Christians cannot understand our Orthodox faith and its Sacraments, it proves that the minds and hearts of such persons are too impure and passionate to bear its purity and brightness, just as sick eyes cannot bear the light of the sun. This heavenly treasure can only be apprehended by the hearts of those who free their minds and feelings from worldly attachments.

* * *

If all priests and their entire flock prayed sincerely and in one spirit, with one accord, using those prayers that the Church offers us to speak aloud or in silence, then what could we not entreat of God? What blessings could we not obtain, from what sins and passions, evil, misfortunes, and disasters could we not be saved? These prayers are the wisest, most effective, most

God-pleasing, most powerful way of inclining the Lord to every mercy. May the Lord grant us all to pray to Him unanimously, sincerely, powerfully, without distraction!

* * *

Those who attend the divine services of the Orthodox Church and study the divine services must bear in mind that the services here on earth are a preparation for the joyful service to God in heaven. Though we serve God with our body, we must serve God with the soul and with a pure heart even more. As we listen to the divine services, we must learn to serve God as the saints did, whose lives and works of faith, hope, and love we encounter in the services. We must remember that God should above all be served with our actions, not only with words. We are called to serve God with our very being: we are given an upright stature so that we can continually look at God, thank, and glorify Him. Our reason, heart, will, and emotions are given us for this reason.

* * *

Lord! Grant that I may always pour forth my supplications to You for the whole world and for the fulfillment of the requests of the whole Church, with sincere love for all, for by Thy grace I have to pray for the sins of all, including my own. Grant, O Lord, God the Father, that I may contemplate Your unspeakable love for the world, revealed in the gift of Your beloved, Only-begotten Son. Grant, O Lord, Son of God, that I may contemplate Your exhaustion in the world and on the cross for the sake of our salvation. Grant, O Lord, the Holy Spirit, that I may contemplate Your grace, abundantly given to the world, for the sake of the goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ, filling so often even my sinful heart! O Holy Trinity, grant that I may continually glorify You with my heart and mouth, and above all with my deeds!

* * *

Those who reject fasting forget the reason for the Fall (intemperance). They forget that the Saviour Himself indicated fasting as a weapon against sin and temptation when He Himself was tempted in the desert (He fasted

forty days and nights). They do not know, or do not wish to know, that a person most frequently falls away from God through intemperance, as was the case with the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah and with Noah's contemporaries, for intemperance is the cause of every sin in mankind. Those who reject fasting deny themselves and others the best weapon against their flesh, with its many passions and the devil. Both are made especially powerful against us through our intemperance. Therefore, those who reject fasting are not soldiers of Christ, for they throw down their arms and give themselves up willingly as prisoners to their sensual and sin-loving flesh. They are blind and do not see the connection between the causes of their actions and their effects.

* * *

We should never forget that we are fallen, impure, corrupt creatures, guilty before the God of righteousness. We should always humble ourselves deeply before Him and before one another. This is impressed on us by the words of the prayers of the Church, including the following: "God, be merciful to me a sinner …," "O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God …," "O Heavenly King …, "Holy God …," "Most-holy Trinity …," "Our Father …," the morning and evening prayers, and nearly all other prayers. Accordingly, let all young people learn and remember that they come from a sinful root and are themselves subject to every kind of sin, and let them lay this knowledge as a foundation for all other knowledge. Though they may know much, let them not pride themselves upon this, but strive above all for the cleansing of their soul and body.

* * *

Love your earthly fatherland and the Father of your country, for it has educated you, enlightened you, distinguished you, honored you, and has provided you with everything; but love the heavenly country and the Father of the age to come incomparably more. That country is far more worthy of respect, far dearer than this one, for it is holy and righteous, immovable, infinite, incorruptible, beautiful, blessed. It has given, and continually gives, you incomparably greater advantages and blessings than your earthly country. The Father of that country is not a fallible, mortal man, but the Eternal God Himself, Who has created everything. It has called you the

child of God, the heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. The Heavenly Father will make you a partaker of all the blessings of His kingdom, which "*eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man*" (1 Cor 2:9). The priceless Blood of the Son of God has gained you that country. But in order to be a member of it, you must respect and love its laws, as you are obliged to respect the laws of your earthly country, for otherwise you cannot become a citizen of so sublime a country. You must also love that school of spiritual education (the Church), which makes us members and citizens of that country.

* * *

The bodiless enemy fights us vehemently during the divine services, because during the services, through God's grace and our own efforts, the renewal of our souls is accomplished. Therefore, let us not be depressed by the attacks of the enemy, but let us rather take courage and be strong, looking with the eyes of our heart at Christ, the inspiration for all our labors, invisibly standing before us and mysteriously accomplishing the regeneration of our souls.

* * *

God's Saints are beautiful, incorruptible, fragrant flowers. Do not touch these flowers with lips defiled by sins; in other words, pray to them with a pure heart and lips, not carelessly, with distracted thoughts. Pray with reverence and without hurrying. They are a spiritual heaven: they led a heavenly, miraculous life on earth, doing great deeds, living in great love, profound humility, gentleness, patience, and self-denial, loving God above all things.

* * *

In the Church are all our sweetest hopes and expectations, our peace, our joy, together with cleansing and sanctification. Here the truth of the future resurrection, the victory over death, is so often announced. What lover of life will not also love the Church with all his heart! Everything that is best, most exalted, most precious, holy, and wise is found in the Church. In the Church we find the ideal of mankind. The Church is heaven on earth.

* * *

In the Church, we are freed from worldly enticements and the intoxication of worldly passions and desires. We become enlightened, sanctified, cleansed in our souls. We draw near to God, we are united with God (“*who didst unite the Word of God unto mankind by thy most glorious birthgiving*”[17]). How worthily revered and loved should the Church of God be! How God’s saints loved it!

* * *

We should never grieve or become irritated at anything, because, when we become frequently vexed and irritated, we become habitually irritated, to the harm of our soul and body. But if we remain indifferent in the face of opposition, we will form the useful habit of enduring everything calmly and patiently. Many occasions for irritation may arise in this life through our countless mutual imperfections, and if we were to become irritated at every provocation, our life would not last more than a few months. Besides, matters cannot be set right by vexation and irritation: they only become worse. Therefore, it is better to be always calm, always full of love and respect for morally sick humanity, especially our friends, relatives, and subordinates. For man is not an angel, and, besides, in our life we sin daily, almost involuntarily, even though we do not wish it: “*For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice*” (Rom 7:19). The Lord taught us to forgive the frequent sins and falls of other people, having said, “*Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*” (Matt 6:12). “*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them*” (Matt 7:12). And who of us does not want others to forgive his needs, stumbling, falls, negligence, and omission? This is why the Apostle Paul also teaches us long-suffering and indulgence, saying, “*Love suffers long and is kind … is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, … bears all things … Love never fails*” (1 Cor 13:4–8).

* * *

Free-thinkers and atheists say that religion, the Church, the divine services, the sacraments and rites were all invented to keep people in fear and submission, to maintain morality, and, perhaps, even to collect money

from them. This is how God’s mercy, His divine economy, His very Incarnation, suffering, and death for our sake are blasphemed by the ignorant free-thinkers who have lost the fear of God. But look at their life: how do they live, do they live long? Having lost their strength and health in dissipation and drunkenness, they become prematurely aged, decrepit, dull, fall ill, and die.

* * *

Christian love prefers enduring all possible discomfort, constraint, lack of fresh air, pecuniary loss, rather than allowing impatience, vexation, irritation, anger, complaining (as a result of these external discomforts) against those who inconvenience us, either because they are poor, or on a whim, or because they want to live at our expense, or at the expense of our peace of mind. Love endures everything and bears everything, even if it means personal inconvenience, or even to the detriment of its own material and bodily life. For where love is, there is God’s grace and every good thing, there is peace, there is sufficiency. A Christian can withstand any suffering, as long as he is not deprived of God’s grace, which is the greatest blessing to him.

* * *

What spiritual storms, hurricanes, fearful, fiery, sudden whirlwinds often occur in the life of those who endeavor to lead a Christian life and to serve God by prayer, interceding for themselves and others before His unspeakable mercy! It is only by God’s mercy that the sloop in which our soul travels over life’s sea toward the eternity is not entirely wrecked and lost!

* * *

A priest must strive, using any means necessary, to be courageous, bold, daring in the face of the bodiless enemy who continually sows his delusive fear, his foolish dread. Otherwise, he will never be a reprover of human vice, nor a true celebrant of the sacraments. Boldness is a great gift of God and a great treasure of the soul! Courage plays an important part in earthly warfare, for it simply works wonders. In the spiritual warfare it does far more.

* * *

The pure source of every true joy, all true tranquility and inner peace, cleansing, spiritual and bodily healing, spiritual power and boldness flows in the Church. Theaters and various worldly distractions and allurements, however, can never replace that which a true Christian receives in the temple, where God Himself comforts the souls of believers as a mother comforts her child. It is in the church, also, that our departed ones receive consolation and solace, cleansing from their sins and forgiveness. How ardently we should love the temple, how we should adorn it! All who recognize its value love the Church, and the Church prays for them, saying: “Let us pray for them who, with faith, piety, and fear of God, enter herein.” “Let us pray for them that bring forth fruit and do good deeds in this holy and all-venerable temple.Sanctify them that love the beauty of Thy house. Glorify them by Thy Divine power.”[18]

* * *

The world is immeasurably great; incalculably many beings living in it, but what order there is in the life of the world of nature! Immeasurably great is the world of celestial spirits, of angels, but what order there is in the angelic world, what strict fulfillment of the will of God! Great is the human world as well, but how much disorder, self-will, how many deformities and misfortunes there are in it, misfortunes, disease, many forms of death—in war, famine, floods, fires, natural disasters, drunkenness, gluttony, covetousness, falsehood, perjury, suicide, murder! They are countless! Woe unto us! But how will it be there, beyond the grave, in eternity?

* * *

Man is a wonderful, grand, wise, artistic creation of the most-perfect artist, God. Man was not originally defiled, but incorruptible and pure; only sin, that monstrous spawn of the spirit of darkness, that foul, foolish, and evil power, made him defiled, sickly, impure, and corruptible in body and spirit, since he has a dual nature. However, the most-wise, almighty, all-merciful Artist did not allow His and our enemy to entirely destroy His beautiful and grand creation, and He made Himself a body like ours and took to Himself a soul in the womb of His most-pure Virgin Mother. By His Incarnation, teaching, miracles, suffering, death, and resurrection, His wonderful and most-wise economy, He again restores to the work of His hands its former, and even greater, beauty and glory. He again bestows on it incorruptibility, holiness, and wonderful Divine beauty and raises it to the highest blessedness, deifying human nature and setting it with Himself on the throne of the Godhead. Glory to You, most-merciful, most-wise, and almighty Artist!

* * *

O, my invisible Benefactor, through Whom I unceasingly live! You Who hear me, You Who fulfill all my heart's desires for my benefit, You Who save me from my sins and the malice of my invisible enemies, You Who mercifully order my destiny, my enlightenment, my help, my glory, my power, my strength, when shall I see You? When shall I see my Benefactor and Creator face to face? And you, my enemy, you devil, who continually fills my soul with sin, you who are crafty, flattering, evil, who continually slays me, darkening, weakening me, covering my face with shame and dishonor, when shall I entirely free myself from you through the grace, generosity, and love for mankind of my Lord Jesus Christ? When will every possibility of pouring the poison of your malice into my heart be taken from you?

* * *

What do I need? I need nothing on earth, except for the indispensable. What do I need? I need the Lord, I need His grace, His kingdom within me. On earth, the place of my pilgrimage, my temporary instruction, I have nothing belonging to me: everything is God's, everything is transitory, indicated for temporary use. Whatever I have in excess belongs not to me,

but to my poorer brothers. What do I need? I need true, Christian, living, active love. I need a loving heart, compassion for my neighbors, I need to feel joy at their happiness and well-being, sorrow during their sorrows and sicknesses, compassion for their sins, infirmities, disorders, deficiencies, misfortunes, poverty. I need warm, sincere sympathy for them in all the circumstances of their lives, to rejoice with those who rejoice, and to weep with those who weep. It is time to stop giving way to our self-love, to egotism, to live only for ourselves, to grab everything—riches and pleasures and worldly honors—for ourselves only. It is time to stop dying instead of living. It is time to stop suffering instead of rejoicing. But that is impossible for us who bear within us the poison of self-love, for self-love is a poison continually poured into our heart by the devil. O, let me exclaim with the Psalmist: "*For what have I in heaven and what have I desired upon earth from Thee? My flesh and my heart have failed, O God of my heart, but Thou art my portion, O God, for ever*" (Psalm72:25–26). Lord, You know my heart and all its movements. O Lord, the witness of my writing these lines! Grant me that which I ask of You! With me this is impossible, but "*with God all things are possible*" (Mark 10:27). Grant me true life, disperse the darkness of the passions, destroy their power by Your power!

* * *

What is the relationship between word and action? The Word of God called the visible and invisible world from nonexistence into existence. The word in the mouth of God was action. Therefore, the word and the deed must be inseparable, as the soul and body are inseparable in their being. He who faithfully and continually fulfills the Word of Christ, with whom the word is the deed, can even now accomplish great and wonderful deeds, since everything will obey his word. The demons will obey him, he will heal diseases and teach people the moral life.

The cross is in Christ and Christ is on the cross: the cross is the image of the crucified Christ, the Son of God. Therefore, the sign of the cross and even its shadow are terrifying to the demons, since it is the sign of Christ Himself, the shadow of Him, crucified. Therefore, it is very important to sanctify the water by immersing the cross in it; through this, it becomes holy and drives away demons.

* * *

A Christian is the vessel of God, the temple of God, the house of God. O, how worthy of honor is a true Christian, how zealously he must shun every sin, and how greatly Christians should respect one another!

* * *

Our most abominable enemy endeavors to destroy love by perverting love. He twists love for God and our neighbor into love for the world and its fleeting blessings and corrupt, ungodly habits, into carnal love, into love for riches and accolades, into love of pleasures and various amusements. Therefore, let us extinguish all love for this world in ourselves, and let us kindle love for God and neighbor in ourselves through our self-denial. Any worldly beauty (as in, a beautiful face) is only a faint, insignificant shadow of the uncreated beauty, the unutterable goodness of God's face. Every earthly pleasure is nothing compared to the coming joy. I pray, O Lord, that the faith of Christ may penetrate into the depths of my heart, that Christ's Gospel may imbue all my thoughts, feelings, words, and deeds, my bones and my brain. Let this faith transform all men, since it is the universal truth, the highest wisdom, and life eternal. "*And this is eternal life, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent*" (John 17:3).

* * *

How fragrant are the bones of the saints! What a wonderful fragrance wafts from the relics of God's holy ones! What a great blessing it is to gain the sweet-smelling grace of the Holy Spirit and life eternal! Why do we rush after corruption? Why have we loved the stink of sins, of noxious passions?

* * *

O Lord, in our prayers we ask the intercession of the spiritually fragrant saints, who are the myrrh of Your sweet savor! Accept their prayers for us, fragrant with love and purity, and save us from the evil stink of sins, for our hearts are unclean and our mouths impure, and we are unworthy of sweetest

conversation with You. Everything in us is earthly, corrupt, impure, and evil, but Your saints are the purest fragrance, especially Your most-pure Mother, Your living, light-bearing temple. She is brighter than the sun, more fragrant than all fine aromas, for heaven and earth are full of the fragrance of Her holiness and Her Divine virtues.

* * *

Utter the name of God with the deepest reverence, remembering that everything was brought by God from nonexistence into existence, and that everything which exists is maintained in good order solely by His mercy, omnipotence, and wisdom. Utter with the deepest reverence the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, "*Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, upholding all things by the word of His power*" (Heb 1:3), Who produces the times and seasons, summer, autumn, winter, and spring. He brings forth all the fruits of the earth. He settles the earth with men and animals, the air with birds, the sea, the lakes, and rivers with fish. He multiplies the human race and provides it with all blessings. He saves it from sins and evil spirits and prepares an abode for those who love Him in the Kingdom of Heaven. He leads the luminaries of heaven out to light the earth and gathers them to spread the darkness of the night. He diffuses life-giving air for all living creatures to breathe. He gives wonderful properties to fire, to warm, to burn, to illuminate. He created the earth, capable of easily traveling around such an immense sphere as the sun, as though it were as light as a soap bubble. He gave it the capacity of generating all sorts of plants. He poured out the waters, capable of being turned into a countless variety of fluids in a countless multitude of fruits, trees, shrubs, and grasses. "*The God that does wonders*" (Psalms 76:15). He is good and almighty, most wise, the God of mercy, bounties, and love for mankind. "*There is none like unto Thee, O Lord!*" (Psalm 85:8). Utter with reverence also the name of the Most-pure Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Ever-Virgin Mary, Who gave birth to Him for our salvation. Through Her, by the Lord's grace, we were found worthy of countless blessings: the forgiveness of sins, sanctification, enlightenment, renewal, deliverance from eternal death, elevation to heaven, divine sonship, deification, inheritance of life eternal. Utter with reverence also the names of Christ's Apostles, who were His eye-witnesses and servants, who spread His Divine

faith throughout all the world, who planted the seeds of faith and the Church of Christ over the whole world. Utter with reverence also the names of the martyrs, born in blood into eternal life, the monastic fathers who, by mortifying their flesh, mortified their sins and passions and were renewed in blessed eternal life. Utter with reverence the names of the unmercenaries who, by their nonacquisitiveness, obtained for themselves the priceless treasures of the spirit and eternal life. Pray thus to all the saints.

* * *

This flesh that we pamper, rest, gratify, and adorn is the enemy of our soul, a very crafty and dangerous enemy. It continually resists the love of God, the will of God, the commandments of God, and it longs to fulfill its own will. It nearly always succeeds in doing so, unless the Lord God, in His merciful and wise providence for our salvation, hinders it with His power. We must ever crucify this flesh with its passions and lusts, not pamper it. We must mortify it by fasting, vigilance, prayer, and work. We must train the soul by reading the Word of God, by thinking good thoughts, and by praying.

* * *

I feel bright, warm, and calm when I turn with my whole soul to the spiritual sun, the sun of righteousness, Christ my God. Then the ice of my heart melts; all its darkness, impurity, and corruption vanish. Spiritual death flees, heavenly life reigns in its stead, and nothing earthly occupies me any longer.

* * *

"*Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience*" (1 Tim 3:9). The holy, divine, most heavenly Christian faith requires a pure heart to transform man's whole being, for it cannot dwell in and benefit an impure heart if the man does not correct himself of his vices. This is also why many are called, but few are chosen. Many call themselves Christians, but few truly are. Few produce fruits worthy of the Kingdom of God; this is why, even among Christians, there are so many atheists and free-thinkers, so many who are superstitious, covetous, sensual, carnal, given to drink,

thieving, and so on. It is not the fault of the religion that some Christians are this way, but they who bear the name of the Christ are guilty in their negligence of their religion and its tenets, in their impurity and attachment to earthly things. Because of their failure to be true Christians, they cannot find room in their impure hearts for the purest heavenly treasure, the faith of Christ. They are lost at the very beginning of their journey to salvation. How terrible for us ungrateful, evil-natured, ignorant, vain, sensual, and slothful creatures! Lord, what shall we do? Conquer us by Your mercy, by Your love, by Your great wisdom; destroy our carnal mind-set and vanquish our malice by the power of Your goodness!

* * *

Every man on earth is sick with the fever of sin, the blindness of sin, the possession of sin. Since most sins come from anger and pride, it is necessary to treat everyone who suffers from the disease of sin with kindness and love. This is an important truth that we often forget. We often, very often, act in opposition to this truth: we increase anger with our anger; we fight pride with pride. Thus, evil grows within us and does not decrease. It is not cured, but spreads instead. Lord, have mercy upon us, have mercy upon mankind!

* * *

By eating of the forbidden fruit in Paradise, mankind was infected with a sickness of the soul: attachment to this transitory life, to earthly blessings and pleasures, resulting in a destructive division of the heart between God and the world, between good and evil. Earthly blessings cannot satisfy the soul created for rejoicing in spiritual, eternal, infinite blessings. Earthly good things are not equally distributed amongst all—through passion or blind attachment some gain possession of very many of them, while others have very few, and some have none at all. This desire to possess is the source of eternal sin, enmity, and death; it is the source of envy and enmity between separate individuals and nations, wars and bloodshed, the prosperity of some and the extreme poverty of others, the gluttony of some and the hunger of others, the exalted position of some and the constraint of others, thefts, extortion, and every kind of evil. This is what eating the forbidden fruit has done; it has caused so much evil that it is impossible to

escape from it. If the Son of God had not become Incarnate and had not suffered and died for our salvation, then all mankind would have remained in endless, inconsolable, and unimaginable misery. All would have been lost in their sins, and everlasting wailing and gnashing of teeth in hell, without any hope of salvation, would have been their lot. Even now, impenitent sinners are doomed to these everlasting torments.

* * *

Occupied with vanity and vain pleasures, you have neither the time nor the desire to penetrate into the spirit of the Christian religion, of the divine services, and to know the rules of the Church, the purpose of the feasts and fasts of the Church, and, in particular, the meaning of every week of Lent. You sometimes memorize a play that is showing at a theater, you know exactly of how many acts or scenes it consists, what its contents are in general and in particular; yet you do not know the meaning of the sacraments, even though they give eternal life and its unutterable blessings to those who receive them worthily. You do not know the essence of the divine services of the Holy Orthodox Church, your Mother, who nourishes, warms, purifies, sanctifies, and strengthens you on her holy, maternal bosom. You do not know the nature and significance of the "Evening and Morning Services," the Liturgy, the daily psalm readings, the readings and rites of the Church. Some people justify the theater, calling it instructive and moral, even harmless (or at least a lesser evil in comparison with drunkenness and profligacy), and with this object they organize theatrical performances everywhere. It is astonishing that Christians have not found any better way of spending their precious time than attending the theater, which both in its origin and meaning is pagan, idolatrous, vain, frivolous. It is a mirror reflecting all the passions and deformities of this world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Only very rarely does it glorify the valor of the sons of our country, and even then, of course, it is an earthly country, not a heavenly one. Everything heavenly, holy, bearing the stamp of Christianity is foreign to the theater. If Christianity does sometimes appear on the stage, it is made the subject of ridicule. The very name of God, terrifying to every creature, is only pronounced there frivolously, with derision and scorn. Sacred orders, such as the angelic monastic calling, are ridiculed. The authority of the government, the family,

and the clergy is put into question when the reprehensible actions of certain representatives of these institutions are publicly ridiculed before the whole of society, before thoughtless young people, even before children, who must hold the names of their parents and superiors to be sacred. One disrespectful or unbecoming word concerning their elders is sometimes sufficient to destroy any sense of respect proper to them. Have Christians become so thoughtless that they can find no better means of spending their precious time than in the theaters, for which they leave even God's church and the divine services? The priceless time of the feasts, given by God to be spent in reading the Holy Scriptures, contemplating God, and doing good, they fritter away in laughter and stupid applause in the theaters. No! Say what you like, theaters are an ungodly institution. Only penetrate into their spirit, and you will agree that they are schools of doubt, mockery, the insolent ridicule of everything, open depravity. Calamities await the society in which there are many theaters, where many people frequent plays! Occasionally, it is true, the theater is the lesser evil for those who love evil. Listen to popular opinion, to those who have visited the theater many times: they do not hesitate to say that theaters lead to depravity. Only the blind, "*whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe*" (2 Cor 4:4), say that a theater is moral. No! Christians should persevere in studying their religion; they should read the Gospel more frequently, they should study the divine services, they should fulfill the commandments and rules of the Church. They should read the writings of the Holy Fathers and religious publications to become imbued with the spirit of Christianity, to live in a Christian manner. This should be your occupation and recreation.

* * *

How bitter were my sins to You, O Christ, my God and my Saviour, when You were buffeted, scourged, spit upon, when Your head was pierced with thorns and You were nailed to the cross for my sake, when You hung on the cross in unspeakable torments to save me from the most bitter, unspeakable torments of hell! I must contemplate Your self-emptying sufferings more often to stop sinning, to live virtuously, to love You with all my heart, to fulfill Your saving commandments. Nevertheless, I often forget this terrifying sacrifice, offered for me by the Only-begotten, unoriginate, coeternal Son of the Heavenly Father. Grant unto me then, O Lord, a pure

heart and unshakeable repentance leading to salvation. Grant that I may find favor in Your sight during the remainder of my life!

* * *

"Have you often called upon Me sincerely in prayer?" God asks the sinner. Have you often thanked Me with a sincere heart for My countless benefits, surpassing all imagination? Have you often offered Me the sincere sacrifice of praise so that I might again and again pour My mercies upon you? But what shall I do with your depravity, your corruption, your perverted mind and heart, your perverted will, hourly inclined to evil and vice? "*Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives*" (Heb 12:6). Thus, do not be cast down, you who are reproved, chastened by Me, but endure. "*Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it*."

* * *

The celebration of the Divine Liturgy requires an elevated soul, not bound by any worldly passions, desires, and attachments. The celebrant's heart must be wholly embraced by the flame of the Holy Spirit, by ardent love for God and for every human soul, especially the Christian soul, so that with a sincere heart he may ever rise to God in prayer: "*I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!*" (Luke 12:49). This fire was sent down from heaven upon the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire. This fire is also necessary for us, for our frozen hearts, in order to warm, soften, melt them again and again, to continually cleanse them, enlighten, and renew them. Where is there to be found such a worthy priest who, like the seraphim, burns before the Lord with love, praise, and gratitude for His marvels of mercy and wisdom manifested to us and in us? I am the greatest of sinners! I unworthily celebrate this most heavenly sacrament, for I have an impure heart, bound by desires and attachments to earthly delights. Lord, You see the depths of our hearts, but "*thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be made clean; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall become whiter than snow*" (Psalm 50:9). "*For to save a righteous man is no great thing, and to have mercy on the pure is nothing*

wonderful, for they are worthy of Thy mercy. But on me, a sinner, show the wonder of Thy mercy."[19]

* * *

Lord! I thank You with my whole heart for saving me countless times from the shame, violence, and cruelty of the passions, and for having quenched in me the fiery arrows of the evil one, and for having guarded my soul with peace, refreshing it with the dew of Your grace. Glory to You, most merciful and Almighty, that by Your grace I still remain whole and unharmed, in spite of the countless wiles of the invisible evil enemies yearning to devour me! I believe and know that You, O Lord, will deliver and save me from all their snares and attacks by ways known to You, and You will grant Your heavenly kingdom to me, and not to me only, but to all those who live piously, for Thine it is, O Lord, to be merciful and save those who desire to be saved, even those who do not desire to be saved. "*O Lord, whether I will or not, save me."*[20]

* * *

"*Let us pray to the Lord for the salvation of our souls."*[21] He who sincerely watches over himself continually notices that our soul is destroyed by various sins, that it sleeps the deadly sleep of sin, that it is continually enthralled by the devil, that it is bound by the strong fetters of the passions. He sees this and sighs, praying fervently to the Lord for the salvation of all souls redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ. Our souls are daily destroyed by anger, envy, judgment, covetousness, love of pleasure, gluttony, drunkenness, fornication, slothfulness, negligence, despondency, complaining, ignorance, foul language, idle talk, frivolity, free-thinking, rebelliousness, insolence, self-will, and other passions. We pray for the peace from above, for "*neither is there any rest [peace] in my bones, by reason of my sin*" (Psalm 37:4).

* * *

Through the divine services the Orthodox Church trains us for heavenly citizenship by teaching us every virtue exemplified by the lives of the Mother of God and all the saints, by purifying, sanctifying, and deifying us

through the sacraments, and by giving "*to us all things that pertain to life and godliness*" (2 Pet 1:3). Therefore, it is urgently necessary for us to attend the divine services wisely, reverently, and enthusiastically, especially on the feast days, and to take part in the sacraments of repentance and Holy Communion. But those who withdraw themselves from the Church and the divine services become the victims of their passions and are lost.

* * *

With what maternal, or rather divine, love the Church daily carries us in her arms, unceasingly raising prayers to the Lord on behalf of us all, in the evening, at midnight, in the morning, and in the middle of the day. The Church teaches us, cleanses us, sanctifies us, heals and strengthens us through the sacraments, guides us in the tenderest and gentlest manner to salvation and eternal life. Blessed are those priests who understand this love and care of the Church for the salvation of her children, and who endeavor to appropriate this spirit, to live by this spirit, to breathe by this spirit, both inside the church building and outside, and to offer prayers and praises, celebrating the divine services of the Church with heartfelt attention and reverence, remembering that through all this they save both themselves and their flock!

* * *

What a miraculous creature is man, what a wonderful creation of God, made in His own image! Even in a fallen state, he is capable of accomplishing many wonderful works, as we constantly see in history and in the present time. Imagine what man could do in a state of holiness and perfection! But what is most deserving of attention, wonder, reverence, and gratitude is his likeness to his Creator, God. He is predestined to immortality, to eternal bliss in God and with God. He will some day shine, like the sun, in the Kingdom of his Heavenly Father. The Lord, foreseeing the glory of His faithful chosen ones, says, "*Then [at the second coming] the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father*" (Matt 13:43).

* * *

During the Office of Preparation before the Liturgy, the whole Church, in heaven and upon earth—the Church of the first-born, inscribed in the heavens, and the Church militant, fighting against the enemies of salvation upon earth—is typically represented as assembled around the Lamb who took upon Himself the sins of the world. What an amazing sight, enrapturing and moving the soul! Is it possible that I too am in this assembly of saints, that I too am redeemed by the Lamb of God? Will I truly inherit the kingdom with the saints if I remain faithful to the Lamb until death? Are not all my brothers also members of this heavenly, holy assembly, also joint heirs of the future kingdom? O, how widely must my heart expand to contain everyone within itself, to love everyone, to care for everyone, to desire the salvation of all as much as my own! This is the greatest wisdom. Let us be simple; let us walk in simplicity of heart with all. Let us remember our high calling and election, and let us continually aspire to the honor of God's heavenly calling through Christ Jesus. "*We are children of God, … heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ*" (Rom 8:16, 17).

* * *

Do not pay attention to the sins of others, and do not behave inimically, either inwardly or outwardly, toward those who sin. Instead, recall your own sins and sincerely repent of having committed them, considering yourself truly worse than everyone else. Pray with love for those who sin, knowing that we are all inclined to every sin.

* * *

A true Christian lives this life as a preparation for the life to come. In his actions, he does not care what will be said of him here, but does care what will be said of him in Heaven. He remembers that he is always in the presence of God, the angels, and all the saints. He never forgets that some day they will bear witness of his thoughts, words, and deeds.

* * *

When I love God and neighbor, I belong to heaven, I become heavenly. But when I am submerged in worldly cares, entranced by worldly

attachments, I belong to the earth, I become earthly, demonic. *"O Lord and Master of my life, grant unto me, Thy servant, the spirit of love."*[22]

* * *

Love. With love for God and neighbor in your heart, you will possess all things and will lack nothing, for where love is, there is God, and God is everything to us, our true life, peace, sweetness, and blessedness. It is strange and pitiable to see with what empty reasons the devil deprives us of love for God and neighbor. They are nothing but dust, the uncountable dust mites that we trample underfoot—money, food, drink, dress, houses, honors. All these things pass away, together with their mother, the earth, and our own much pampered bodies, which are also nothing but dust.

* * *

Remember Love, Who lay down His life for mankind, and do not spare your life itself for your brother's. Mercilessly crucify your carnal man, who inclines you away from giving to your brother.

* * *

Greedy, covetous miser! Does money, does bread give you life? Is it not God? Is it not His Word that gave existence and life to you and all other creatures? Does not the Son of God uphold "*all things by the word of His power*"? (Heb 1:3). Do money and bread, water and wine alone support your life? Does not man live "*by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*"? (Matt 4:4). Are not money and bread mere dust? Is not bread the least of the things necessary to maintain our life? Everything was created and is maintained by the Word. The Word is the source and preservation of life.

* * *

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God in Trinity, is glorified by all His creatures, by the angelic hosts unceasingly singing the Thrice-holy hymn, and by the holy Church of Christ—the apostles, martyrs, hierarchs, monastics, the righteous, and all the saints—by the whole visible

world, by all living Christians, by the whole world. The truth of the Trinity of the Godhead surrounds us like the air that we breathe and by which we are wholly penetrated. Is it possible, after this, to have any doubt in the divinity of the Son or of the Holy Spirit? How many works do we see accomplished in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit? How many powers of the Holy Spirit have we experienced, and still experience, in ourselves? The Holy Spirit is the spiritual air of intelligent creatures. What ordinary air is to physical bodies, the Holy Spirit is to reasoning and free creatures. He fills, enlivens, and enlightens them, enduing them with wisdom and strengthening them. The Son of God is "*the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6), our rest: "*I will give you rest*" (Matt 11:28), our joy: "*I will see you again and your heart will rejoice*" (John 16:22). We have experienced, and continue to experience this, in ourselves. Shall we listen, after this, to any who suggest the contrary? Is it not the quiet whisper of the evil spirit, of that dark spirit breathing falsehood, malice, despondency, constraint, and fire, who vanishes like smoke at the mere mention of the cross of the Lord? Shall we listen to this deluder, and shall we be disturbed by his snares? Be completely assured that he is the total denial of truth. "*If I say, 'I do not know Him [the Father],' I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him*" (John 8:55). The fact that he always destroys the soul proves that he is falsehood, death, not truth and life. We only know of one cause of death—the devil. Amen.

* * *

If we call upon the saints with faith and love, they will immediately hear us. Faith unites us to them, while love unites them to us. For they are in God, and we are in God, Who is Love (1 John 4:16).

* * *

Why are long prayers necessary? By prolonged, fervent prayer, we warm our cold hearts, hardened in prolonged vanity. It is strange to think, and still more so to require, for the heart, hardened in worldly vanity, to be immediately imbued with the warmth of faith and the love of God. No. Labor and more labor, time and more time are needed to attain this. "*The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt 11:12). The Kingdom of Heaven does not come quickly into the heart when

men so willingly flee from it. The Lord Himself declared it His will for our prayers to be long, by giving us as an example the persistent widow who constantly bothered the judge with her requests (Luke 18:2–6). Our Lord, our Heavenly Father knows, even before we ask Him, what things we need (Matt 6:8) and what we want, but we do not know Him as we must, for we give ourselves up to worldly vanity, instead of committing ourselves into the hands of our Heavenly Father. Therefore, in His wisdom and mercy, He turns our needs into a pretext for our turning to Him: “Turn ye, My wandering children, even now unto Me, to your Father, with your whole hearts. If before you were far from Me, even now, at least, warm by faith and love to Me your hearts which were formerly cold.”

* * *

Worthy, sincere, and reverent service to the Lord in the church, accompanied by living faith, is a source of peace, joy, and blessedness to our souls. Thus, a reverent priest celebrating the services, performing the sacraments, and reading the prayers finds the highest delight and blessedness for himself in his duty.

* * *

The Word of the Lord is action, life, being. From Him Who exists comes existence; from Life comes life; from Truth comes truth. But from the devil, who fell through his false pride, who wished to appropriate to himself the impossible, and who fell away from life and truth, come only delusion, falsehood, and death.

* * *

Man, they say, is free: no one must compel him, he must not even compel himself in the faith. Lord, have mercy upon us! What a diabolical opinion! If they are not compelled, then what will become of humanity? What will become of you, herald of these newly invented rules, if you do not compel yourself to do good, and instead choose to live as your vicious heart, your proud, short-sighted and blind reason, your sinful flesh, incline you to live? Tell me, what will become of you? Do you not compel yourself, I do not say to good, but only to your duty and to what is useful? How can one do

anything without forcing oneself? How is it possible not to compel or inspire Christians, too, to fulfill the precepts of religion and piety? Is it not written in Scripture, "*the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt 11:12)? How is it possible not to compel young boys especially to their studies and prayers? What will become of them? Will they not become idlers, good for nothing? Will they not instead become proficient in every evil?

* * *

Concerning works of charity in our time. If you enjoy earthly blessings in full measure and give to the needy, but indulge yourself more than you give, it means that you do good works without the least self-denial. Your works of charity are insignificant. But what else do we find? What are these so-called works of charity? People arrange various entertainments with a charitable object. In other words, they intentionally wish to serve their sinful flesh and the devil first, and only afterward their neighbor and God. This is no charity at all! Such works only bear the name of charity. "*Let us do evil, that good may come*" (Rom 3:8). "*Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep!*" (Luke 6:25).

* * *

When you pray to God and ask various blessings (spiritual, heavenly, material, earthly) of Him, repeat in your mind and heart the following words of the Saviour: "*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he ask for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father Who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him?*" (Matt 7:7–11). Then you will be assured of obtaining that which you ask, as well as all the blessings most necessary for you, according to the wisdom and grace of God.

* * *

When you come across familiar truths in your reading, do not say: “This is nothing new; I know already! I have said the same myself.” This is diabolical pride. Such a frame of mind smacks of sophistry: “I know everything, good and evil.” It is very near the following madness: “I am omniscient.” Many people do not read sermons and religious books because they think they know all that is written there. They imagine that all that is written there is a repetition of what they learned long ago. On the other hand, they read worldly books willingly, in which there is always truly the same, empty worldly vanity, and sometimes several times over! O, impure flies that feed upon carrion!

* * *

The Lord calls all of us to union with His divine nature, and we must carefully preserve spiritual union and peace among all of us, as members of Christ’s body, as members of one another. “*For we are members of one another*” (Eph 4:25).

* * *

After worthily celebrating the service and the sacraments, always thank the Lord with your whole heart by reading a short prayer for allowing you to worthily, faithfully, and lovingly serve Him and His intentions and deeds, regarding His love for mankind. Our service to our Lord, Creator, and Redeemer is the greatest gift to us sinners, a gift that will always produce good fruit, both in those who receive sanctification and salvation from God through us priests and also in ourselves, because it gives us peace, life, and joy. We must always thank God for deigning to make us, His sinful and unworthy servants, His fellow laborers. As the Apostle Paul says, “*We are God’s fellow workers*” (1 Cor 3:9), the servants and stewards of His Mysteries. “*Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God*” (1 Cor 4:1). Meanwhile, what do many of us do? We celebrate the services and sacraments, with their attendant prayers, unwillingly, indolently, negligently, hurriedly, with omissions, wishing to finish the holy work more quickly, and hastening after worldly vanity. What a fearful temptation, and what a grievous sin! Involuntarily, one remembers the terrible word of God to the neglectful doers of His work: “*Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord deceitfully!*” (Jer 48:10). I repeat, what a

fearful delusion! Yes, it is a fearful delusion, because, through blindness, we neglect the words of the Holy Spirit, Who inspires the prayers of the sacraments and services. We neglect what should be the source of our sweetest peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, even the source of our bodily health, for the words of the prayers, the services, and the sacraments, when uttered with faith, reverence, and the fear of God, calmly, with a fervent spirit, have the indubitable and miraculous property of enlivening, strengthening, and healing our body and soul. This I know from experience. It is a grievous sin, I repeat, because by celebrating the sacraments carelessly we mock the Lord's holy things. What must we do, then, to celebrate the sacraments and services properly, attentively, with a fervent spirit? We must always have living faith that our God, worshipped in the Holy Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is ever with us, regarding us, and at the first word of our sincere prayer, He is ready to help us in our holy work, for the prayer of faith, like breathing, is absolutely necessary for us while we live on the earth. What breathing is to the body, the prayer of faith is to the soul. By remembering that the Almighty is always with us, and by truly having Him in our thoughts, and by casting away from our hearts all earthly thoughts, doubts, cares, and attachments, we shall always accomplish God's work worthily.

* * *

Concerning hypocritical prayer. Did the Pharisees think they prayed hypocritically? They did not: they considered their hypocrisy to be God-pleasing! It had become a habit; it had become, so to speak, their second nature, and they thought they were serving God by such prayer. Do the Christian hypocrites of the present day think that they pray and live hypocritically? They do not. They pray every day, sometimes for a long time but they pray out of habit, with their lips, not their hearts, without heartfelt contrition, without a firm desire for amendment, and only in order to fulfill the established rule. They imagine they are doing "*God's service*" (John 16:2), but their prayer only incurs the wrath of God. We all sin, more or less, by praying hypocritically, and we shall be greatly condemned for this. Humble yourself, consider yourself as nothing but grass, which is insignificant compared to ancient oak trees, or as a prickly thorn, which is

worthless compared to fragrant and delicate flowers. You are indeed grass; you are indeed a prickly thorn because of your passions.

* * *

When you give alms to someone who asks, especially if he seems unworthy of your alms because he is healthy and not destitute, resulting in your giving alms unwillingly, you must repent of this. Divine, holy Love also bestows His blessings on us, even when we already have more than enough. Love for your neighbor should say to you that even though he has some money already, it will do no harm to give him more (although, to tell the truth, a few pennies will neither significantly increase or amend his fortunes). God gives to me, why then should I not give to the needy? I say "to the needy," for who would hold out his hand without need? Had you only received gifts from God according to your merits, you would have become a beggar yourself. God is bountiful to you not according to your merits, and you yourself desire His generosity. Why, then, having plenty, do you not wish to be generous yourself with your brothers?

* * *

Look at everything in this world as a fleeting shadow, and do not cling with your heart to anything. Put no great value on things in this world, and do not lay your hopes on anything earthly. Cling to the One, imperishable, invisible, most wise God. "*We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal*" (2 Cor 4:18).

* * *

Healing spiritual sicknesses (the passions) entirely differs from healing bodily sicknesses. With bodily sicknesses, one's attention is directed at the disease: the diseased body part can be massaged, soaked in warm water or healing compresses, etc. Spiritual sicknesses are quite different. If you have fallen spiritually ill, do not pamper your disease, do not warm it, but rather beat it, crucify it. Do the opposite of what the disease demands. If you have been infected by hatred for your neighbor, crucify this passion quickly and immediately strive to love your neighbor. If you have been infected by

avarice, quickly be generous with your alms. If you have been infected by envy, quickly do good for others. If you have been infected by pride, quickly humble yourself to the very ground. If you have been infected by love for money, praise those who are nonacquisitive and strive to emulate them. If you are infected by the spirit of enmity, strive for peace and love. If you are overcome by gluttony, strive to be abstinent and keep the fasts. The whole art of curing spiritual diseases consists in not paying attention to them, and in not indulging them in the least, but immediately cutting them off.

* * *

Concerning the fulfillment of that which you ask of God in prayer. Believe this: as easy as it is for you to ask, it is far easier for God to fulfill your request, and if God speaks, He also does, for with the Lord there is no word without action: "*So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void*" (Isa 55:11). Remember constantly during prayer that God is He Who Is, and that from Him everything proceeds: both the thought concerning anything and the word concerning anything, and its corresponding action. He is all wise, almighty, and all gracious.

* * *

People lose so much during their conversation at home by not speaking about God! How animated, how fruitful, and how varied would their conversation become! Rivers of saving words would flow out of the bellies of believers (John 7:38). How edifying, how soothing such conversation would be! What true blessedness it would give! But in homes that do not speak of God, but only of worldly vanity, conversation soon becomes exhausted, people soon feel dull, and then kill their precious time in stupid games or dancing. The enemy of mankind has observed this weakness in men to occupy themselves with vain, worldly conversation, and, in general, to spend their time in vain amusements. He has derived, and continues to derive, an immense advantage from this weakness. He has helped found theaters and circuses, those incarnations of vanity, that ridicule of worldly vanity. Meanwhile, foolish people, inclined to vanity and indolence, willingly frequent these theaters and circuses, not finding any better occupation that would afford peace and pleasure to their souls. "*Vanity of*

vanities, all is vanity…. Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all" (Eccl 1:2; 12:13).

* * *

You are ill, and your illness is very painful. Your spirits are low, and you are depressed. You are troubled with thoughts, each darker than the next. Your heart and lips are ready to complain, to blaspheme God! My brother! Listen to my sincere advice. Bear your illness bravely, and do not merely turn away from despair, but on the contrary, rejoice, if you can, in your illness. You ask me what cause there can be for joy when you are racked with pain? Rejoice that the Lord has sent you this temporary chastisement to cleanse your soul of sins. "*For whom the Lord loves He chastens*" (Heb 12:6). Rejoice that you are no longer gratifying those passions which you would have gratified had you been in good health. Rejoice that you are bearing the cross of sickness, and that therefore you are treading the narrow and sorrowful way leading to the Kingdom of Heaven. Diseases tend to reveal only their painful, unpleasant, and terrible sides to our own eyes. Seldom do any one of us, when we are sick, remember the benefit of the illness for the soul, but in God's all wise and most merciful providence, not a single disease remains without some benefit for the soul. Sicknesses, in the hands of Providence, are bitter medicine for the soul, curing its passions, its bad habits, and its inclinations. Not a single disease sent to us shall return without compound interest. Therefore, we must keep in mind the usefulness of sicknesses, so that we can bear them more patiently and more calmly. "*He who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin*" (1 Pet 4:1), says the Holy Scripture.

* * *

The Lord's love is greater than a mother's love. My mother bore me in her womb, and by God's command, she gave birth to me. Afterward, she fed me, caressed me, and carried me in her arms. When I was able to walk by myself, she stopped carrying me in her arms, and still earlier she ceased to feed me at her breast. But the Lord always, so to speak, bears me in His womb: "*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me*," says He, "*and I in him*" (John 6:56), or "*So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of my mouth*" (Rev 3:16). He

always carries me in His arms: "*I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me*" (Isa 49:16), "*Upholding all things by the word of His power*" (Heb 1:3). He is my power, my sweetness and my joy, the light of my mind and my heart. He constantly nourishes me with the many products of the earth, as a mother nourishes her child. He is my "*strong food and drink inexhaustible.*"[23] Our parents leave us—and we them—when we grow up, for it is said: "*A man shall leave father and mother and be joined to his wife*" (Matt 19:5), either in the literal sense of the words, or figuratively, to Christ, the highest and holiest Love, greater than that of a loving wife. The Lord, from the beginning of our existence until our death, does not leave us for a moment. He is "*continually before Me*" (Isa 49:16), every moment providing for me as a bird provides for her young ones. He is our hope even in death; He is our life after death; He is our consolation at His judgment. He will not cover us with shame even then,[24] and He will lead us into the eternal mansions of the heavenly kingdom.

* * *

My brothers and sisters who are preparing for Holy Communion! Let us fear hardened insensibility to our sins; let us fear the pride of our hearts, which says: "I do not need any forgiveness of sins; I am not guilty, I am not sinful," or else: "My sins are trifling, they are only human ones" (as though it were necessary that they should be diabolical!) or: "I do not feel that living in sin is wrong." This is Satanic pride, and Satan himself speaks these words in your hearts. Let us feel deeply, deeply, with our whole hearts, our countless sins. Let us sigh for them from the very depths of our souls. Let us shed tears of contrition to propitiate the Master, Whom we have angered. Let us not in the least justify ourselves as the Pharisees, the hypocrites, did: "*For before Thee shall no man living be justified*" (Psalm 142:2), and we can only propitiate God through sincere repentance for our sins. Let us put aside indifference and coldness; let us labor for the Lord with a fervent spirit. Let us not forget that we are now begging the Master of our lives and our righteous Judge to have mercy on our lives, lived long in sin. Is this a time for coldness or indifference, which are proper even in social intercourse, in our everyday interaction with our fellow men? Should not our soul, on the contrary, be transformed into spiritual fire? Should it not

burst into tears of heartfelt repentance? O, my God, my God! Our iniquities have increased beyond the number of hairs on our heads, above the number of grains of sand in the sea, and yet we do not feel them, we are indifferent to them, we do not cease to love them. *"If Thou shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord; Lord, who shall stand?"* (Psalm 129:3). Grant, Lord, unto us all a contrite spirit and a humble heart, so that we may offer You true penitence. Amen.

* * *

When your faith in the Lord weakens, either during your life and prosperity or in the time of sickness and death, when it grows dim from worldly vanity or through illness and from the terrors and darkness of death, look with the eyes of your heart at the hosts of our forefathers—the patriarchs, prophets, and righteous ones. Remember St Simeon, who took the Lord up in his arms, Job, Anna the Prophetess. Remember the apostles, hierarchs, monastic fathers, martyrs, the unmercenaries, and all the saints. See how they ceaselessly directed their gaze to God, both during their earthly life and at the time of their departure from this life. See how they died in the hope of the resurrection and life eternal, and strive to imitate them. These living examples, which are so numerous, are capable of strengthening the wavering faith of every Christian. Those Christian communities who do not venerate the saints and do not call upon them in prayer lose much in piety and in Christian hope. They deprive themselves of great support to their faith by not considering the examples of the saints, who were also human beings, given to passions.

* * *

When your spirit is dejected during sickness and begins to imagine the terrors of death, calm and comfort your troubled, trembling, and sorrowful heart with the following words: "Thou, O Lord, in the depths of Thy wisdom and love for mankind, orderest everything and givest unto all everything that is profitable for them."[25] Have faith that He will unfailingly order everything for your own good, whether it be life, sickness, misfortune, sorrow, or death, so that even you could not desire better for yourself. Do not say, "It is too early for me to die. I would have wished to live longer for the glory of God, to help my relatives and neighbors. I

should have liked to look a little longer at the world, to enjoy earthly blessings." Be thankful to God for having already enjoyed His blessings, favors, and generosity. Now submit to His will, to His call. At the same time, do not despair of the continuation of your earthly life.

* * *

In my heart, I comprise both God and man through faith and love, through the prayer of faith and love. How deep and vast is the human heart! How great is man!

* * *

A true shepherd and father of his flock will live in his flock's grateful memory even after his death. They will praise him, and the less he worried about praise on earth, because of his zealous labor for their salvation, the more his glory will shine after his death. Even after his death, he will make them speak of him. Such is the glory of those who labor for the good of all.

* * *

You are a creature fallen of your own free will, corrupted by sins. This is the most powerful incentive to pray. You daily receive the greatest mercies from God. This is a powerful incentive to thank God. You daily contemplate the works of God's omnipotence, wisdom, and goodness. Here is an incentive to daily praise.

* * *

On the manifestation of Satanic pride in man. Most often, pride reveals itself in the following: the man infected with it makes himself equal to all, or at any rate to many who are his superiors in age, strength, abilities, and he cannot bear to be considered inferior to them. If a proud man is a subordinate, he does not respect his superiors as he should. He does not like to greet him, he does not respect his orders, but fulfills them unwillingly, only out of fear. He makes himself equal to all educated people, and he does not acknowledge anyone's superiority, or he only acknowledges the superiority of very, very few. If he is an educated (or even an uneducated)

son, he does not pay the respect due to his parents and benefactors, especially if they are simple and coarse, considering them equal to, or even lower than, himself. You must take the utmost care not to compare yourself with others in any respect, but always to put yourself below them, even though you may truly be better or equal to others in some respects. Everything good in us comes from God and is not our own. "*And that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast*" (Eph 2:8, 9). "*But One and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills*" (1 Cor 12:11). How can we be proud of the good that does not belong to us and put ourselves on equal footing as those who have been placed above us by God and common opinion? "*Do not sit down in the best place, lest one more honorable than you be invited by him; … for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted*" (Luke 14:8; 18:14).

* * *

When we speak of the God of glory, of His will, of His law, then we must entirely forget our own glory and be completely absorbed in the contemplation of the glory of God or of His most-wise, all-gracious will. At such times, we should not think of our own imperfections, which the devil puts into our mind and heart to lower us in our own estimation and to plunge us into false shame, despondence, and despair. We must remember that there is no perfection in anything on earth or in any earthly glory: "*For we know in part, and we prophesy [preach] in part*" (1 Cor 8:9). And he who is ashamed and blushes for his imperfection is ashamed of a phantom, appearing to him in his own imagination, and is proud of merely imaginary perfections.

* * *

I have seen and heard men who take pleasure in maliciously relating troublesome episodes in the lives of great and even holy men. Because of these episodes (real or imagined), they condemn the whole life of such men, calling them hypocrites, even apostates. They will happily provide you with facts, but these facts are as dark and doubtful as their own suspicious, cunning souls, which would like to find an imaginary justification for their own vicious deeds in the spots, sins, and weaknesses of others. Such people

end up not justifying themselves, but only increasing their own condemnation by beholding the mote in their brother's eye and judging him, not considering the beam (truly a beam!) in their own eye (Matt 7:3). You say: "There are such and such sins in this holy father, or in that pious man." What of that? He is a man, and no man is without sin. "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*" (1 John 1:8). Are you yourself without sin? If not, then why do you cast the stone of condemnation at your brother? If I were to examine your life, according to the Word of God, I would convict you of countless, grievous sins by your own words. I would condemn you of pride, presumption, unbelief, love of money, adultery, misinterpretation of the Word of God and God's commandments, coldness to your faith, and who knows how many more sins! I would perhaps find that the whole of your body is dark, because the eye of your heart is evil. O, how revolting to me is this demonic joy at the sins of your neighbor, this hellish desire to prove real or imaginary weaknesses! And yet, people who act in this way dare to say that they respect and strive with all their might to fulfill the commandment to love God and neighbor! What sort of love is it, when they intentionally wish to find black spots even in great and holy persons, when they blacken the whole life as a result of a single sin, and do not wish to cover their neighbor's sin, if, indeed, it ever existed? Have they forgotten that charity "*endures all things*" (1 Cor 13:7)? What evil these moral worms do themselves and others! They undermine proper respect for a renowned person, darken his light for them, hinder others from imitating him, and trouble their minds with thoughts of judgment. They harm themselves, too, by receiving from the devil the poison of judging their neighbor. Brother! "*Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand*" (Rom 14:4).

* * *

Having invoked the Holy Spirit upon the Holy Gifts lying before you, and having sanctified them by the prayer of consecration during the Liturgy, remember that heaven and earth shall pass away, but the words of the Lord shall not pass away (Matt 24:35). Remember that the bread and wine have absolutely changed into the Body and Blood of the Lord, by the will of the

Lord Himself and by the operation of the Holy Spirit, even if the officiating priest should be unworthy because of some weakness.

* * *

Concerning forcing ourselves to all that is good. "*The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Matt 11:12). Therefore, we must continually force ourselves to truth and goodness. When praying, we must force ourselves at every moment to utter each word with power, truly from the heart. When we are negligent, inattentive to our heart, when we don't force ourselves to pray genuinely, our prayer will be hypocritical, false, and hateful to God. We must say the words of prayer so that we ourselves are persuaded of their power. If our words of prayer persuade us, they will also persuade God, and vice versa. God will grant us according to our own heart.[26] The more sincerity, the more heartfelt fervor we have when praying, the more generous will be the gift.

* * *

Remember, man, that you are morally and physically nothing. Morally, because you are wholly sin, passion, and infirmity. Physically, because your body is earthly dust. In order to vividly, palpably show their humility before God, people in times past, and even some people in the present time, sprinkled ashes on their heads and put aside their bright clothes, which gives birth to vanity in the immortal human spirit. Therefore, remember that even the smallest good in you comes from God, just as the smallest breath of air expelled from your mouth comes from the air surrounding you.

* * *

Glory to the Most-holy, consubstantial and Life-giving Trinity! When the devil oppresses me with displeasure or hatred against my neighbor for any worldly, carnal reason, and I feel distressed and tormented, I rise up, and lifting the eyes of my heart to the Holy Trinity, I say: "Father, Son, and Most-holy Spirit, have mercy upon me." I myself consider the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to be the real, actual presence of the Most-holy Trinity, Who is present everywhere, even in a single word, and immediately I feel at ease, and the enemy flees before the Almighty name,

worshipped for all eternity, and vanishes like smoke. "*Glory to the holy, and consubstantial, life-creating, and undivisible Trinity.*"[27] Most-holy Trinity! Teach me how to despise all earthly things, teach me to seek peace, satisfaction, and blessedness in You alone! And in order that I may not be puffed up by the merciful condescension and salvation of the Most-holy Trinity, may I always remember that the Holy Trinity is mercifully attentive to every worm, to every little bird! May I also remember that some Christians, who have accomplished many mighty works in the name of God, will some day hear these words from the mouth of the Lord: "*Depart from Me, … I do not know you*" (Matt 7:23; 25:12), because they did not live a life according to the Gospel. Most-holy Trinity! Preserve me from pride and teach me humility! You hear me and save me, mercifully and speedily. I may become proud through such mercy. I may turn Your infinite goodness and mercy into a pretext for self-praise, as though I myself were worthy of such attention, as though I had done some good. Protect me, Most-merciful Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit from every sin—under the cover of Thy wings.

* * *

When you silently speak in your heart the name of God, or the Lord, or the Most-holy Trinity, or the Lord God of Sabbaoth, or the Lord Jesus Christ, then in that name you have the Lord entirely. In His name is His infinite mercy, His boundless wisdom, His inaccessible light, omnipotence, and immutability. Approach this all-creative, all-sustaining, and all-ruling name in your thoughts and heart with the fear of God, with faith and love. This is why God's commandment strictly forbids us to use God's name in vain, because He is His name, one God in three Persons, a simple Being, comprised by a single word, although at the same time, He is not contained or limited either by it or by anything that exists.

* * *

This life is not a joke or a toy, although men have turned it into a joke and a toy. They heedlessly play with time, given for preparation for eternity; they play with idle words. They assemble at their friends', sit and talk idly, and then begin to play at something. They go to theaters, and there both the performers and the spectators merely amuse themselves. Others

amuse themselves with their intellectual gifts, with human infirmities or virtues, with the ability to speak or write well. Some even amuse themselves with food and drink, using them in excess instead of only using them for satisfying the needs of hunger and thirst. Some amuse themselves with their clothes, with their faces. Some amuse themselves with their children, instead of educating them in faith, piety, and the fear of God. Their whole life is a game. How terrible will it be for those who merely amuse themselves!

* * *

O, how terrible it is to use food and drink for amusement, to eat and drink in excess! A full stomach makes a man lose faith and the fear of God. It makes him lose feeling in prayer, thanksgiving, and praise to God. A satiated heart turns away from the Lord and becomes as hard and unfeeling as a stone. This is why the Saviour carefully warns us against overeating and drunkenness: "*And that Day come on you unexpectedly*" (Luke 21:34), because of the anger of the Lord with us for heedlessly and idly spending our time in eating and drinking.

* * *

The more a person gratifies his sensuality, the more he becomes carnal, and the more he drives away from himself the Most-holy Spirit of God, Who cannot dwell in those who lead a carnal life. "*What communion has light with darkness?*" (2 Cor 6:14). Such a state, worthy of tears, is experienced by very many, but alas! They do not even recognize that they do not have the Spirit of God in them, as a man blind from birth is not conscious of his great loss in not seeing the light. Such people have no faith or love in their hearts. They lack the spirit of prayer, and they avoid communion with the Church. My God, how many dangers there are in life for me! When I gratify my flesh too much, I become my own greatest enemy.

* * *

Remember that the celebration of the life-giving Mysteries is the unchangeable will of the life-giving Trinity, predetermined from the

creation of the world: it cannot but be. When you are celebrating the Mysteries, God the Father Himself, by His Holy Spirit, changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of our Lord, God, and Saviour Jesus Christ. You are merely an instrument. The Father Himself, the Son, and the Holy Spirit celebrate the Liturgy through you, and the Trinity consecrates the Holy Gifts. "*Thou art He that offereth and is offered, that accepteth and is distributed, O Christ our God.*"[28] Therefore, remember the immutability of God and the truth of all His words.

* * *

You will only worthily perform the sacrament of repentance when you will become a lover of souls, not money, when you will become patient, not irritable. O, what great love for our neighbors' souls is needed to confess them worthily, patiently, without hurrying or growing angry! The priest who confesses should remember: "*there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents*" (Luke 15:7, 10). How zealously should he strive to awaken feelings of repentance in those who confess to him, who sometimes do not even know what to repent of, as they should! The priest should also remember how the Apostles night and day instructed every one of the newly enlightened Christians, instructed them with tears (Acts 20:31). Every thought of money gained in the service of God should be entirely thrown aside. The priest should trust to God alone, the true lover of souls, for just recompense. Question the penitent concerning his sins, and teach him with firmness and sincerity, not indolently or with a divided heart. A firm word will call forth firm repentance, speedily piercing the heart and drawing forth tears of emotion and heartfelt contrition. However, if the priest inquires not firmly, but lazily, without sincerity, then his spiritual child, seeing the indolence and insincerity of their spiritual father, will not be disposed to confess sincerely, from the heart.

* * *

Imagine, as much as you are able, the omnipotence and majesty of the Hypostatic Word of God. He speaks, and His word immediately becomes many different creatures. He says: "*Let there be light*," and there is light. He says: "*Let there be a firmament*," and He makes the land. He says: "*Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together into one place … Let there be*

lights in the firmament of the heavens … Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures," and so on, "*and it was so*" (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 14, 20, 24), according to His word. Thus the voice of a military commander, resounding through the air and reaching the soldiers' ears, moves the troops according to his will, placing them in various positions, making them perform various maneuvers, and attaining through them the fulfillment of his various intentions and purposes. Imagine these masses of created matter. Imagine how the enormous mountains rose up from the earth according to the Word of God! What noise the waters must have made when they gathered together into oceans, seas, and rivers. Imagine how the air was diffused, how the most varied plant life suddenly appeared at a single word of the All-creating God. Imagine how the planets appeared and shone, how they began to perform their infinite revolutions. Imagine how the fishes, birds, reptiles suddenly appeared, and finally man himself. And all these (except man) were created from one and the same formless matter, or, to speak more precisely, from only four soulless, formless, inanimate elements. O, does not all this make the mind marvel? "*How great are Thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all!*" (Psalm 103:24). Even in our time, the Master creates everything that He pleases from matter: He says, and it is done. He changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Eucharist.

* * *

You are a being endued with speech. Remember that you derive your origin from the Word of the Creator of all things, and that in union (through faith) with the creative Word, by means of faith, you can yourself become a material and spiritual creator. Believe that by your faith in the creative Word of the Father, your own word, too, will not return to you vain or powerless (when, for instance, you pray to God, the Benefactor, according to the holy Church's instruction or the Lord's guidance), but it will bring you all gifts necessary for good deeds. Believe that through faith in the creative Word you will not be unsuccessful in teaching people either in the church during divine services, or during the celebration of the sacraments in homes, neither will your teaching in schools be unsuccessful, but it will rouse the minds and hearts of those listening to you.

* * *

Remember that the possibility of action is contained in the word itself: it is only necessary to have faith in the power of the word's creative potential. With the Lord, action is inseparable from word. Not a single word addressed to Him shall return back to you: "*For with God nothing will be impossible*" (Luke 1:37). It should be the same with us, for we are images of the word, and the word is most truly united with us through His Incarnation, deifying us, making us partakers of the Divine nature.

* * *

By opening to others the gates into the Kingdom of Heaven through baptism, will we not enter ourselves? By cleansing others through repentance and absolving them from their sins, will we not obtain remission of our sins? By uniting others with Christ in the Sacrament of the Holy Communion, will we not ourselves be most truly united with Him "in the never-ending day of Thy [Christ's] kingdom"?[29] By bestowing upon others in the Sacrament of Chrism the strengthening and propagative grace of the Holy Spirit, will we not obtain strength and power ourselves from the Most-holy Spirit, and will we not ourselves grow in spiritual gifts? Truly, we firmly hope to receive the promised blessings by the grace, generosity, and love for mankind of our God and Saviour. God grant that we may all receive them! Only let us not become slothful and despondent! Let us "*make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts*" (Rom 13:14), but let us hold "*the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience*" (1 Tim 3:9), and let us progress in love for God and our neighbor.

* * *

When you doubt in the accomplishment or fulfillment of any word of prayer, remember that the nature of the word is accomplishment, realization, and that the Holy Spirit, teaching us "*what we should pray for as we ought*" (Rom 8:26), is Himself called the Accomplisher. It is He also Who accomplishes our prayer. Remember that the word is power. "*With God nothing shall be impossible*" (Luke 1:37). The Word of the Lord "*shall not return to [Him] void,*" but, like rain or snow, it shall water the earth of our hearts, and shall give seed (fulfillment) to the sower. Even of men

people say: “His word has extraordinary power.” You see, therefore, that the word is power, spirit, life.

* * *

When you pronounce the powerful, commanding, creative words of the Lord Himself, consider their fulfillment as easy and usual a matter as breathing, as easy and usual as it is for an infant to be formed in its mother’s womb, even incomparably easier.

* * *

To have unshakeable assurance during prayer, to be sure of receiving all spiritual blessings from the Lord, believe that by uniting yourself unto the Lord during your prayer you become one spirit with Him (1 Cor 6:17). Have faith that God is most gracious, almighty, and most wise. He is all-perfect perfection; therefore, as much as you are able, according to your faith and love, you will become a partaker of His Divine perfections. In the union of your soul with God, do not consider anything impossible or difficult to accomplish, “*for with God all things are possible*” (Mark 10:27), not only things that you can imagine with your mind, but even miracles beyond your imagination, which you consider impossible, for God is an infinite Being, and all His perfections are infinite.

* * *

If you doubt that you will obtain the blessings you ask of God, then remember at least that even you, despite being evil and avaricious, neither rich, nor almighty, still give to those in need who ask of you, and sometimes even before they ask you, when you only know of their need. “*How much more will your Father Who is in heaven,” who is most gracious, most rich, most wise and almighty, “give good things to those who ask Him*” (Matt 7:11).

* * *

The greater the number of persons for whom you ask blessings of the Lord, and the greater are those blessings, the more violently the devil

opposes your priestly prayer, to stop God granting these blessings, for, "*According to your faith, be it to you*" (Matt 9:29), and "*all things are possible to him who believes*" (Mark 9:23). However, where the snares of the devil abound, there also the grace of God abounds.

* * *

He who prays must remember that if God spared not even His Only-begotten Son for us sinners, but sacrificed Him for our salvation, then how will He not give us everything, every imaginable blessing? For if the infinitely greatest blessing has been given to us, then will not lesser blessings be also given us? Our Heavenly Father gives us every blessing in Christ. "*His Divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him*" (2 Pet 1:3).

* * *

During prayer, when the devil violently tempts you, put all your trust in the Lord, "*for He cares for you*" (1 Pet 5:7). During prayer, only have faith in the Lord, Who is at your right hand, and all things shall be possible unto you.

* * *

When you sin for the fiftieth, the hundredth time in a day, when you are seized with demonic despondency and you despair in God's mercy, say, from the depths of your soul, with St Simeon Metaphrastes[30]: "I know well, O Lord, that mine iniquities have gone over my head; but I also know that without measure is the multitude of Thy bounties, and unspeakable is the mercy of Thy great goodness, and no sin is there that can overcome Thy loving kindness. Therefore, O most wonderful King, O Lord most good, do Thou show Thy mercies in me, a sinner; manifest in me the power of Thy goodness and the might of Thy loving-kindness, and receive me who turn to Thee. Accept me as Thou didst the prodigal, the thief, and the sinful woman. Accept me, though in word and in deed, by my evil passions and unreasonable imaginations, I have sinned without measure against Thee. But, O Lord, O Lord, rebuke me not in Thy righteous wrath; neither chasten me in Thy displeasure. Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for, though I am

weak, I am also Thy creature. Thou, O Lord, hast established Thy fear in me, and yet I have done evil in Thy sight. O Lord my God, I have put my trust in Thee. If there is any hope of salvation for me, if Thy loving mercy can overcome the multitude of my transgressions, be Thou my Saviour, and, according to Thy goodness and mercy, loosen, remit, and forgive all wherein I have sinned; for my soul is full of trouble and there is no hope of salvation in me. Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving kindness; deal not with me according to my sins: but turn, preserve, and deliver my soul from the evils besetting it, and from all its wicked undertakings. Save me for Thy mercy's sake, that where sin abounded Thy grace may much more abound, and I will glorify Thee always, all the days of my life. For Thou art the God of the penitent, and the Saviour of sinners."[31]

* * *

Remember that if your prayer is not spoken idly, but with feeling, then your words will not return to you without answer, without power (like a husk without the grain), but will unfailingly bring you those same fruits that are contained in the word, as the fruit is enclosed in the peel. This is the most natural thing, as natural and common as the fruit and its peel in nature. But if you scatter your words to no purpose, without faith, without feeling their power, like a shell without a kernel, then they will return to you empty, in the same way as if you were to sow the husk, nothing would happen, but if you scatter seed, full ears of corn will grow. The better, the richer your seeds, the fuller the ears of corn. It is the same with our prayers; the more sincerely each word is pronounced from the heart, the greater will be the fruit of the prayer. Each word, like a grain, will bring you spiritual fruit, like a ripe ear of corn. Which of those who pray has not experienced this? It was not without reason that the Saviour compared the word with the seed, and the human heart with the ground (Matt 13:5). The same applies to the words of prayer. Also, who does not know that the rain moistens the ground, watering the plants? Likewise, the Word of God, and even our own word spoken with faith, shall not return to us without watering our own soul or the souls of others who are obedient and faithful. This is just as natural as rain watering the earth, helping plants grow.

* * *

He who becomes irritated against his neighbor because of something material values a material object higher than his brother. But what can be higher than man? Nothing on earth is more exalted.

* * *

When you pray, strive to pray more for others than for yourself, and during prayer vividly imagine all mankind together as forming one body with you, and each separate person as a member of the Body of Christ and your own member, "*for we are members of one another*" (Eph 4:25). Pray for all as you would pray for yourself, with the same sincerity and fervor. Consider their infirmities and sicknesses to be your own. Consider their spiritual ignorance, their sins and passions, to be your own. Consider their temptations, misfortunes, and manifold afflictions to be your own. Such prayer will be accepted with good will by the Heavenly Father, that most gracious, common Father of all, with Whom "*there is no partiality*" (Rom 2:11), "*no variation*" (Jas 1:17), that boundless Love Who embraces and protects all creatures.

* * *

What a miracle! When our soul comes into contact with an unbeliever who is indifferent to God, it feels a natural aversion to him, but the devil tries to turn this just dislike and indignation into sinful anger. In order not to become angry, thereby serving the devil, we must say to ourselves: "I feel a dislike and coldness toward my brother for his aversion and coldness to God, but I do not feel hatred or malice against him, for I bear with him as my own sick member, and I wish to cure him in meekness, instructing him that opposes himself, "*if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth*" (2 Tim 2:25). If he turns to God, I shall turn to him also with heartfelt love; if he becomes compassionate toward others, and does not think of himself alone, of his own advantage and pleasures, then I shall sympathize with him as well. In addition, we must be patiently loving with everybody and look more at ourselves, what we are. Are we not cold and indifferent to God and our neighbors? If so, then there is no reason

for us to cast a stone at our brother, when this stone should be directed against our own selves.

* * *

"*God came to earth in order to raise us up to heaven.*"[32] It would seem, after this, that even when living on earth we must live as if already in the Heavenly Kingdom, dwelling there in hopeful anticipation. But in reality, more often than not, the opposite is true. Men cling with their whole being to the earth and everything earthly. Why? Because our common enemy, the devil, strives with all his might to oppose the intentions of the God-man, Christ. He does everything in opposition to Christ. Christ wishes to raise men up to heaven, and He has given them all the means to do this. Meanwhile, the devil, who was cast down from heaven for his pride, tries to attach men to earthly, sensual, transitory things any way he can, and, in order to attain this end, he employs the most powerful inducements. Christ taught us truth; the devil teaches us falsehood and strives in every way to contradict every truth, devising various calumnies against it. The devil tries to keep men in error, in the enticement of the passions, in darkness of mind and hear; in pride, avarice, covetousness, envy, hatred, wicked impatience, irritation; despondence, in the abominations of fornication, adultery, theft, false witness, blasphemy, negligence, slothfulness, and sluggishness.

* * *

Bear in your heart continually the words "Christ is Love," and strive to love all, sacrificing everything for the sake of love—not only your possessions, but even your own self.

* * *

The root of all evil is a self-loving heart, or self-pity, self-sparing. All passions are born from this excessive, sinful love for oneself, passions such as indifference, insensibility, hard-heartedness toward God and neighbor, impatience, irritability, hatred, envy, avarice, despondency, pride, unbelief, doubt, greed for food and drink, gluttony, love of money, vanity, slothfulness, hypocrisy. Never pity yourself in anything. Instead, crucify yourself and your old man, who hides chiefly in the flesh, and you will

strike at the root of all your passions. Bear patiently all that is unpleasant to your flesh. Do not spare your flesh, antagonize it, and you will become a true follower of the Christ. The true wisdom of a Christian consists in his acting always against his flesh during his lifetime. "*For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells*" (Rom 7:18), says the Apostle Paul.

* * *

Even the heart of a perfectly healthy man sometimes becomes weak in faith and love for God and neighbor, easily abandoning itself to carnal desires—slothfulness, negligence, coldness, gluttony, avarice, fornication, pride. On the other hand, the heart of a sick man, a heart wounded, oppressed, weary, is strengthened in faith, hope, and love, and is far removed from carnal passions. This is why the Heavenly Father Who cares for our salvation chastises us with various sicknesses. The oppression and sorrow of sickness make us turn again to God.

* * *

To love your neighbor as yourself, to sympathize with him in his joy and sorrow, to feed, and clothe him if he is in need of food and clothing, to breathe, so to speak, the same air as he him—all this should be as natural to us as eating and staying warm. These are not special virtues or great deeds of love for your neighbor, and if you think so, you will soon become proud. "*For we are members of one another*" (Eph 4:25).

* * *

I marvel at the omnipotence and wisdom of God. I marvel how He has created out of earth and water the many and diverse parts of my body: flesh, blood, skin, bones, hair, lungs, liver, veins, eyes, ears, everything. How He set into motion this matter, inert and motionless in itself, and how all the body's internal processes are now uninterruptedly accomplished within me. Wonderful are Thy works, O Lord, "*In wisdom hast Thou made them all*" (Psalm 103:24). You have no words to describe the wisdom, goodness, and omnipotence of God the Creator and Provider: ask them of the Word of God. What a variety there is of heavenly and earthly creatures, animate and

inanimate, created from the four elements! "*Thy knowledge is too wonderful for me, … I cannot attain unto it*" (Psalm138:6).

* * *

I think; but for God to think and to create (or change) is one and the same thing, because He is simple and an almighty Being. Because He is simple, everything is possible to Him in a single moment. The Lord speaks, and this is sufficient for me to believe without any doubt that it is so. Doubt is impossible. God would not be God, if He were not almighty. "*But our God is in heaven and on earth; He hath done all whatsoever He pleased*" (Psalm 113:11). He wills, and it is. He willed that water should flow from the rock, and it flowed. He willed that there a world should arise out of nothing, and it was. His works prove that He is almighty. Come and see.

* * *

Strive to transform your entire life into service to God. If you are reading anything at home, begin with a short, fervent prayer for God to teach you and make you wise in faith and piety and the careful accomplishment of your duties. Never read idly, merely to pass the time. When you do this, you demean the word, which should serve entirely for our salvation, and not for idle words, nor as a means for spending time pleasantly. If you talk to your neighbor, speak reasonably, prudently, with instruction and edification; avoid idle talk as the serpent's poison, remembering that "*every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment*" (Matt 12:36). If you are teaching children (either your own or others'), turn this work into God's service, teaching them zealously, considering beforehand the best means of making the instruction clear, comprehensible, complete (as far as possible), and fruitful. Conquer with the name of the Lord and the sign of the cross the snares of the enemy who endeavors to disturb, darken, constrain, and weaken you. Even when you eat, drink, or do anything else lawful, "*do all to the glory of God*" (1 Cor 10:31).

* * *

God the Word, a simple Being, is in every word. How carefully we must therefore speak, with what humility and prudence, lest we anger God the

Word, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit!

* * *

My Master, Lord Jesus Christ! My Most-speedy Intercessor Who never abandons me to my shame! I thank You from the bottom of my heart for mercifully hearing me when I called to You in my darkness, constraint, when I was in the flames of the enemy. I thank You for delivering me speedily, mightily, and graciously from my enemies, and for giving my heart freedom, ease, light! O my Lord, in what distress was I from the snares of the enemy! How timely was Your help, and how obvious was Your almighty help! I glorify Your mercy, Master, speedy to hear us. O hope of the despairing, I glorify You, that You have not let my face be ashamed, but have mercifully delivered me from the darkness and ignominy of hell. After this, how can I ever despair of Your having mercy on me, a sinner? I shall always, always call upon Your sweetest name, my Saviour. You, O Giver of countless benefits, save me as You have ever done in Your immeasurable compassion, for Your name is Lover of mankind and Saviour!

* * *

Do not believe your flesh when it grows weak and refuses to serve you, using the pretext of not being sufficiently strengthened by food. This is a delusion; overcome it! Pray fervently, and you will see that the weakness of your body was false, imaginary, not real. You will see in truth that "*men shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Matt 4:4). Do not put your trust in bread.

* * *

"*Christ is on earth, be ye lifted up.*"[33] This means that he who believes in Christ's coming to earth, in His Incarnation, and in all His loving care for our salvation, does not cling to earth, but continually raises himself up to heaven in mind and heart. His will continually strives upwards to God, to heavenly blessings, and is not allured by earthly delights, by earthly splendor, riches, and honors. Unfortunately, we have little faith in Christ, and we try to combine our love for the world with love for Christ, to unite

earthly attachments with love for God. These things are incompatible! "*If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself*" (Matt 16:24) of everything he is passionately attached to in the world, and let him hate his own sin-loving soul (December 24, 1869).

* * *

My God! What sweetness is in the heart from the love and sincere sympathy of our neighbor! Who shall describe this blessedness of the heart penetrated with the sense of others' love, and my love for them? It is indescribable! If here on earth mutual love gives us such joy, then with what sweetness shall we be filled in heaven, when we shall dwell with God, with the Mother of God, with the heavenly powers, with God's saints? Who can imagine and describe such blessedness? What earthly, temporal things would we not sacrifice in order to obtain such unutterable blessedness of heavenly love? God, Your name is Love! Teach me true love, strong as death. I have tasted its sweetness in full when I have conversed in the spirit of faith with Your faithful servants; I have truly obtained plenteousness of peace and life through such conversation. Strengthen, O God, that which You have created in me. O, may it be thus all the days of my life! Grant that I may more often enjoy the communion of faith and love with Your faithful servants, with Your churches, with Your Church, with Your members!

* * *

My sweetest Saviour! Having come down from heaven to minister to mankind, You did not only preach the Word of Heavenly Truth in the temple, but You went through the towns and villages. You shunned no one; You visited the houses of all, especially of those whose fervent repentance You foresaw with Your Divine gaze. You did not remain at home, but were always in loving conversation with all. Help us to equally love communion with Your people, lest we priests should shut ourselves up in our houses away from Your sheep as if we were imprisoned, only coming out for services in the church or to officiate in the houses of others, only out of duty, only with prayers learned by rote. May our lips be freely opened to discourse with our parishioners in the spirit of faith and love. May our Christian love for our spiritual children be opened and strengthened by animated, free, and fatherly conversation with them. O what sweetness,

what bliss have You concealed, O Lord, our boundless Love, in spiritual conversation, warmed by the love of a spiritual father for his spiritual children! And how is it possible not to strive upon earth with all our might after such joy? Yet it is only a faint beginning, only a faint likeness of the heavenly blessedness of love! Especially love the communion of good works, both material and spiritual. "*But do not forget to do good and to share*" (Heb 13:16).

* * *

When the devil disturbs you with lack of faith in the Mysteries, suggesting to you that it is impossible for bread and wine to be the Body and Blood of Christ, say to him, "*With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible*" (Mark 10:27). With God the thought itself is action. "*[He] said … and it was so*" (Gen 1:9). He speaks, and it is. Short and clear. All the worlds are upheld by the Word of God. "*Upholding all things by the word of His power*" (Heb 1:3). How strange for the feet to desire to stand above the body and dare to instruct the Creator of all things! Is it possible to doubt in the existence of that of which our own experience and the visible and invisible world assure us? What is the mystery of the existence of all creatures? It is the Word of the Creator. "*[He] said … and it was so.*" Everything comes from the Word, all the infinite varieties of creatures come from the Almighty, Most-wise, All-merciful Word of God, not from anything else. Examples of how quickly and powerfully the Word of God creates are also given to you in the Scriptures: the waters were turned into blood at the voice of Moses, the dust of the earth into lice, a rod into a serpent, a hand was covered with leprosy, and then suddenly cured, light was turned into palpable darkness. Moses merely stretched forth his hand, and in an instant the Lord changed the substance of things. The land of Egypt was covered with frogs when Aaron stretched forth his hand over the waters at Moses's bidding. Moses took ashes in his hand and sprinkled it toward heaven, and men and beasts were covered with sores. Moses merely stretched forth his rod toward heaven, and the Lord sent thunder and hail (Exod 4, 7–10). Come and see how easy it is for the Lord to create and to change all things! Does not the same Lord act through and with us priests? The Lord Himself is here, the Lord Who was incarnate for us, the Lord Who is the Mediator and the Accomplisher

of all, “*for Thou art He that offereth and is offered, that accepteth and is distributed, O Christ our God.*”[34] The priest only says the words, stretches forth his hand, and the Lord changes everything.

* * *

Remember that the mind is the servant of the heart, which is our life. If the mind leads the heart to truth, peace, joy, and life, then it fulfills its designation and is true, but if it leads the heart to doubt, confusion, torment, despondency, darkness, then it does not fulfill its calling and is absolutely false (“*of what is falsely called knowledge*” [1 Tim 6:20]). If the result of faith in something is the heart’s peace, joy, ease, this is quite sufficient. It is unnecessary to require the reason to prove of the truth of such a faith; it is undoubtedly true, since the heart asserts it through its enlivening, for the purpose of all inquiry is truth and life.

* * *

When you listen to confessions, you cannot help but feel you own miserable sinfulness before God and all the misery, ignorance, and sinfulness of human nature. Confession is a truly a cross! The priest feels himself such a debtor to his spiritual children during confession! He truly feels himself to be an insolvent debtor, a debtor guilty before the heavenly truth, deserving of a thousands fires of Gehenna! You see and feel people’s deep ignorance, their ignorance of the truths of religion and their own sins, their stony insensibility, making it a confessor’s duty to pray for them most fervently, to teach them day and night, early and late! O what ignorance! Some do not even know the Holy Trinity; they do not know who Christ is; they do not know why they live on earth! And what a multitude of sins! Meanwhile, we seek riches and rest; we dislike work, we become irritated when there is more work than usual! We want large houses, rich clothing! Let us not love earthly rest, let us not become slothful, let us not be negligent in the performance of our spiritual duties, and let us not deprive ourselves of heavenly blessings and rest, for having rested in excess here, what rest can we hope for there?

* * *

The Most-holy Trinity is the most perfect union of three Persons in one Being, because it is the most perfect unity.

* * *

He who gives with a loving heart gives alms genuinely. He who converses with everyone joyfully, and not only with the intellect and lips is truly merciful. He who sincerely respects everyone, he who preaches the Word of God and serves God with a true heart, not hypocritically, in a word, he who embraces all and carries all in his heart with love, despising everything material that may become a hindrance to love between himself and his neighbor—such a person is truly merciful.

* * *

In order to prevent our corrupt nature from being enticed by the temporary sweetness of sin, the Lord has made most agreeable sensual pleasures, at which we greedily throw ourselves, to be harmful for us, both by their own nature and through our own rapacity and intemperance. This is true of almost all gourmet dishes, all pleasant drinks, all carnal pleasures. Glory to the mercy and great wisdom of the Heavenly Father, Who uses every means to prevent us from falling into sensuality and its coarse pleasures. Who hath spiritual eyes to see and ears to hear, let him see and hear (Matt 13:9). Therefore, Christian, the very harmfulness of sensual pleasures shows that we are not created and do not live on earth for them, but for higher, spiritual, eternal pleasures. Therefore, rejoice, my soul, and find peace in God. He is your perfect, harmless, true and eternal enjoyment, and you know this already from experience! All earthly pleasures, however, are delusional, harmful, fleeting. From the first indulgence, from a mere touch, they plant the seeds of death. Suffering and diseases are proof of this.

* * *

Brother, do you feel deadly anger in your heart against your neighbor, are you tormented by evil thoughts from the offenses he causes you? Here is a way to save yourself from this inner torment. Call to mind the countless multitude of your own sins, and vividly imagine how the Master of your life bears with you, how He daily, endlessly forgives you your sins if you pray

to Him sincerely. And you do not wish to forgive your neighbor a few fits of passion excited in him by the devil! Sigh, weep if you can at your own foolishness, condemn yourself only, not your neighbor in any way, and the Lord will forgive you. Your inner constraint will vanish like smoke, your thoughts will become clear, your heart will become calm, and you will again walk in freedom of heart. Train yourself to be so meek that you simply do not hear, reproaches, calumny, affronts, as if they were heard by somebody quite different, or by your shadow. Do not allow yourself to be in the least suspicious. "*I have walked innocently*" (Psalm 25:1). "*I kept my mouth as it were with a bridle, when the sinner stood up against me…. I kept silent*" (Psalm 39:2, 3). "*But I was like a deaf man, and heard not, and as one that is dumb, who doth not open his mouth*" (Psalm 38:14).

* * *

Christ is the Bread of Life, therefore let us lay aside our care about earthly bread. The God Who gives us the Body and Blood of His Son for our food and drink will likewise give us physical bread. He Who clothes our soul in Christ will likewise give us clothing for our body. He Who deigns to dwell in us will not deprive us of an earthly dwelling.

* * *

To doubt the divinity of the Holy Spirit means to doubt in our own life, for the Holy Spirit gives life and spiritually feeds all. He serves as a spiritual sun, air, food, and drink to our souls. To doubt His divinity means to reject prayer, for we pray through the Holy Spirit; it means to reject truth and holiness, for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth and of all holiness; it means to reject every spiritual consolation and comfort in sorrows and sicknesses, for the Holy Spirit is the true and only Comforter, together with the Father and the Son; it means to reject faith, for faith is given by the Holy Spirit; it means to reject hope and love, for hope and love are likewise bestowed upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit. "*The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us*" (Rom 5:5). To reject His divinity is to reject spiritual and bodily power, for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of power and strength; it means to reject wisdom and understanding, the fear of God, our own breathing, for He is the breath, the air of the soul. In a word, it means to doom ourselves to moral nothingness

and destruction. Do not pay attention to such doubts, for they are the breath of the evil spirit, the spirit of falsehood, the destroyer: "*You will know them by their fruits*" (Matt 7:16). Doubt in the truth is always destructive to the soul. Every truth is the breath of the Holy Spirit: the Word of God, the writings of the Holy Fathers and of the teachers of the Church, the words and works of every pious person who loves the truth.

* * *

Love for God and neighbor, in our present corrupt state, is impossible without self-sacrifice. He who wishes to fulfill the commandment to love God and neighbor should immediately devote himself to ascetic labors and privations for the sake of those he loves. Amen. "*By this we know love, because He [the Christ] laid down His life for us*" (1 John 3:16). "*Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends*" (John 15:13).

* * *

God is eternally watchful; therefore, we must always pray to Him with a watchful and sober mind and heart: "*Therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers*" (1 Pet 4:7), and drive away any forgetfulness and slothfulness. Do not let your prayer evaporate, only dry words remaining, but let it breathe with the warmth of the Spirit, like moist hot bread just taken out of the oven.

* * *

Many people pray hypocritically, and their hypocritical prayer becomes a habit for them. They do not even realize (nor do they wish to) that they pray hypocritically, not in spirit and truth, so that if anybody were to accuse them of praying hypocritically, they would become angry with those who dared to say what is, in their opinion, such an absurdity. People do not become hypocrites in an instant, but gradually. At first, perhaps, they prayed with their whole hearts, but afterward—for always praying with the heart is difficult work, to which we must force ourselves, and "*the kingdom of heaven suffers violence*" (Matt 11:12)—they begin to pray more with their lips, superficially, not from the depths of the soul, which is much easier.

Finally, after increasing assaults by the flesh and the devil, they only pray with their lips, without the power of the words of the prayer reaching their hearts. There are very many people who pray in this way. The Lord said of them: "*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me*" (Matt 15:8; Isa 29:13). What is said concerning prayer equally applies to the communion of the Holy, immortal, and Life-giving Mysteries. At first, a person communes with living faith, with a feeling of love and devotion, but afterward, after continual opposition of the flesh and the devil to the truth of God, he cedes victory to them, beginning to commune hypocritically, not of the Body and Blood, but of bread and wine, according to the thoughts of his heart. The essence of the Mysteries, which "*are spirit, and they are life*" (John 6:63), as the Saviour said, "*has no place*" (John 8:37) in him; he is inwardly robbed by Satan. May God preserve us all from such unworthy communion, from such blasphemy against the Lord! It is the same with the sacrament of confession.

* * *

Confession is a school of self-denial for a priest. How many occasions does it present for impatience, irritation, slothfulness, negligence, and inattention! It is truly the touchstone of the priest's love for his parishioners. A priest must never live in softness and ease, and especially must never indulge himself with sleep and pleasant food and drink, otherwise the devil will strike his heart with some passion or other, and will cast him into constraint and spiritual paralysis. It is necessary to crucify, absolutely to crucify, the flesh. Confession for a priest is a labor of love for his spiritual children; he must be no respecter of persons, long-suffering, compassionate, for charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, seeketh not its own (peace or riches), is not easily provoked, rejoiceth not in iniquity, or does not connive at iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth, covereth all things, endureth all things, never faileth (1 Cor 14:4–8). Then it is becomes clear, then the priest himself sees and his spiritual children see whether he is a shepherd or a hireling, a father or a stranger to his children, whether he seeks his own or Christ Jesus. My God, how difficult it is to confess people properly! How grievously one sins before God by not confessing his sins properly! How weak grows the word! How many hindrances the enemy puts in our way!

How obstructed the source of the word becomes in our hearts! How the tongue and reason fail! O, how much preparation is required for confession! One must pray so much for the successful accomplishment of this great work! What ignorance one meets in one's spiritual children! It is necessary to be with them day and night, calmly, gently, patiently teaching each one of them. What a cross is confession for a priest, to be conscious of the ignorance of those who confess to him, of their coldness, of their sinfulness of every kind, and having at the same time the consciousness of his own sinfulness, his own infirmity, languor, the inertness of his heart to sympathy and to zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of his neighbor, as much as for his own. How many crosses the devil lays upon me during confession! He turns the work of love, the work of the discourse of a father with his children, into the work of a hireling who settles his accounts with the master's slaves unwillingly.

The Lord Jesus Christ, together with His Father and the Holy Spirit, is everywhere. The angels and saints are one spirit with the Lord. But if, through an attack of the evil spirit, you have lost for a time sincere faith in the Holy Spirit, then during that time there is neither Son nor Father for you, for faith is given by the Holy Spirit, by the Spirit of Truth—that is, the Spirit of Christ, Who said of Himself: "*I am … the truth*" (John 14:6), the Spirit of the Father: "*The Spirit of your Father who speaks in you*" (Matt 10:20), the Spirit of the Son: "*God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts*" (Gal 4:6).

* * *

On the Word. In the word there is an image of the Most-holy Trinity, for in the word there is both thought, and word, and spirit. When praying truly with the whole heart, we feel that we are praying through the Holy Spirit: our words are diffused with incredible warmth, but at other times we feel that we are praying not through the Holy Spirit, but through the spirit of falsehood. The lips say one thing, and the heart feels another, sometimes quite the contrary; for instance, we say the words with doubt, in the spirit of impatience or resentment against someone, or in the spirit of pride, self-exaltation, not acknowledging ourselves to be that which we really are.

* * *

On anger. If you are angry with your brother because of his sins, even supposing they tempt others, remember that you yourself are also not without sins that also tempt others, although they may perhaps be of a different sort. You desire that your sins that tempt others should be covered by the indulgence and forgiving love of your neighbor. Recollect how thankful you would be, how lovingly you would embrace them for their all-forgiving love, how this compassion would lighten your already heavy sorrow for your sins and would strengthen your weakness in your struggle against them, how it would strengthen your spirit by allowing you to trust in God's mercy! But that which you would desire for yourself in such cases you must also desire for your brother: he is your member and a member of Christ. "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (Mark 12:31). When judging your neighbor in the anger of your heart for his sins, always remember that you yourself are not without sin. "*And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Hypocrite*"—truly a hypocrite—"*first remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye*" (Matt 7:3–5). Besides, your brother "*to his own Master stands or falls*" (Rom 14:4), not to you. If your brother has sinned against you, then you must certainly forgive him his offense or transgressions against you. You yourself are daily in great need of your own sins being forgiven by the Heavenly Father, and so you pray: "*Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*" (Matt 6:12). And if you wish your sins to be forgiven, you must forgive your brother's sins. "*For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*" (Matt 6:14–15).

* * *

Our soul is simple, because it cannot at the same time love God and another object, such as money, food, drink. It cannot love both its neighbor and money, food, and drink. "*No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon*" (Matt 6:24). This is why the Psalmist says by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "*If riches increase, set not your heart upon them*" (Psalm 61:11). Thus, Christian, be

afraid, each one of you, of setting your heart upon money, food, drink, dress, luxurious rooms, books, or secular music. Do not love, do not indulge the flesh with anything, not with pleasures, fine views, dainty food, drink, or with sleep, idleness, slothfulness, shameful deeds, games, idle travels, or frivolous books. Love the one God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your thoughts, and love your neighbor as yourself, and be indifferent to everything else in the world. Do not attach yourself to, or be greedy after, anything. Strive after simplicity in everything, in order to be loved by the simple Being Who is God. Drive away all cunning, doubt, unbelief, and duplicity from your soul.

God is Life. He gave being and life to everything. He is He Who Is, the Almighty, for everything proceeds from Him, and everything is sustained by Him. Let us therefore know Him Who alone Is. The devil is death, because he voluntarily turned away from God the Life, and since God is He Who Is, so the devil, since he has completely fallen away from Him Who Is, is the cause of that which is not, of delusion, imagination, for he cannot truly bring anything into being by his word. Therefore, he is falsehood, as God is truth.

* * *

What air is to the animal and plant worlds, the Holy Spirit is to spiritual beings, to angels and men. This is why the Lord said, "*The wind blows where it wishes, and your hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes*" (John 3:8). Believe, therefore, that your soul breathes by the Holy Spirit; know your Benefactor, your Life, worship Him daily and honor Him with your love and good works. Avoid the deadly breath of the devil, his sins and passions, especially enmity, discord, pride, and unbelief. Say to yourself more often: My soul breathes by the Holy Spirit, may I ever glorify the Holy Spirit, together with the Father and the Son!

* * *

We must always remember that man is the breathing of God's mouth and the image of God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, while the sins and infirmities in him are accidental, coming from without, foul stains which can easily be cleansed by grace. "*Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop*

and I shall be made clean; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall become whiter than snow" (Psalm 50:9). We must remember that "*God so loved the world,*" though it is adulterous and sinful, "*that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). And we must love every man as ourselves, as God loves them. We love ourselves, though we are great sinners; we must also love others, though they may be sinful as well, for there is no one without sin.

* * *

False thoughts regarding the faith immediately declare themselves to be unlawful, because they kill the life of the heart, a clear sign that they proceed from a deluded liar who has the power of death—the devil. True thoughts show their truth by their action: they give life to the heart, a sign they proceed from the Life-giving Spirit of God, Life itself Who proceeds from Life, the Father, and rests in Life, the Son. "*By their fruits you will know them*" (Matt 7:20). Do not, therefore, be disturbed, and do not linger in trouble and doubt when deadly thoughts come crowding into your head and oppress your heart and your soul; they are false, they proceed from the devil, the destroyer of men. Drive them away, and do not ask where they come, these uninvited guests. By their fruits you shall instantly know them. Do not dispute with them, or they will lead you into a labyrinth from which you will not be able to extricate yourself, in which you will become entangled and exhausted.

I love to gaze at the image of the risen Life-giver with the banner in His hand, with that symbol of victory over death and Him who has the power of death: "*O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is thy victory?*" (1 Cor 15:55). What a glorious Victor! What a cruel, most wicked enemy He has conquered! An enemy who gloried in his victories for thousands of years! "*To Thee, Conqueror of death, we cry: Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.*"[35] "*We glorify Thee, Life-giving Christ, Who descended into hell for our sakes, and didst raise all with Thyself.*"[36] "*In rising from the tomb, Christ, Thou didst raise all the race of Adam with Thyself.*"[37]

"*Every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment*" (Matt 12:36). From this you see that an answer and a punishment awaits you for every idle word, and not only for scandalous, shameful ones.

With our Lord, the All-creating Word, there is not, and cannot be, a single idle word: "*So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void*" (Isa 55:11). "*For with God nothing will be impossible*" (Luke 1:37). We are created in God's image; therefore, our words should never be pronounced idly, in vain, without intention. Instead, every word of ours should have spiritual, edifying power. "*Let your speech always be with grace*" (Col 4:6). Therefore, be vigilant, lest you speak idly, without meaning, either in prayer or in conversation.

How can you worthily, with faith and love, receive the Body of Christ when you despise His members or have no compassion for them? All Christians are members of Christ, especially the poor. Love His members, have compassion on them, and the Master will plentifully bestow His rich mercy on you. And can any mercy be greater than that which our Saviour bestows on us in the communion of His Most-pure Body and Blood?

* * *

The words "For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, now and ever," signify that you alone are everywhere and eternally reign, Almighty and glorious King. The kingdom is the Father, the power is the Spirit, and the glory is the Son, for it is said, "*I have glorified You on the earth*" (John 17:4).

Do not allow your heart to be dead, do not allow your heart to incline to slothfulness, to spiritual sleep, to stony insensibility; otherwise, it will be terrible for you when the heart's disposition remains so during God's service, which requires labor both of heart and mind. Uproot from your heart, by any means necessary, both bodily and spiritual pride, which resists the Holy Spirit. It lies imperceptibly hidden in your heart and clearly shows itself in your conversation with your fellow men or during prayer.

* * *

From the essence of the reasoning spirit the word is born. The word belongs to the thought; the word discloses the thought and is equal to it. From, and with, the thought proceeds the spirit, resting in the word and communicating in the word to those who listen. This spirit is fully equal to the thought and to the word, and belongs to them. For instance, in the words

“I love,” one sees both the loving origin and the words born from it, and one feels a kind of pleasant sense of love.

* * *

I give thanks to the Lord my God, to the God of my salvation! During Passion Week the enemy hindered me just before the time of confession by striking my heart with constraint, disturbance, and evil despondency. But I prayed with my whole heart, with undoubting faith, to Him, to the God of my salvation, and said: “O God, most merciful Father! You spoke through Your Only-begotten Son, our Lord Christ, saying, ‘*Ask, and it will be given to you … For everyone who asks receives … Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks bread, will give him a stone? … how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*’ (Matt 7:7–11). Embracing with faith these words in my heart, I call upon You. Grant me now Your Holy Spirit, that my heart may be strengthened to perform the work of confession, to wisely bind or loose the consciences of men, to be patient and kind, to instruct my spiritual children gently, to their edification.” And what happened? O God of mercy! I went through the whole time of confession exceedingly well; I was calm, kind, edifying, and did not experience any heaviness or unpleasant rushing. I glorify the merciful right hand of the most gracious Heavenly Father. Thus it is ever necessary to strengthen oneself through heartfelt prayer to the Heavenly Father before every spiritual work, as our Lord Jesus Christ Himself prayed before He began His public ministry to mankind, before choosing the Apostles, and before His sufferings.

Do not be offended if anyone speaks or behaves insincerely to you, for do you always speak and behave sincerely with others? Are you not often hypocritical? Do you always converse sincerely, not hypocritically, with God in prayer? Do not your lips often pronounce words of truth, while your heart lies? Do you walk before God in sincerity and simplicity? If you yourself are not right before God and men, if you are often false, hypocritical, then do not be angry if others behave insincerely, hypocritically toward you. “*So they might learn that one is punished by the things by which he sins*” (Wis 11:16). Have compassion for those sins in your neighbor that you yourself are guilty of.

Believe firmly that the wickedness of the devil in you, and your own wickedness, will never conquer the unspeakable, infinite mercy of God. Great is the wickedness of the devil in you, but the mercy of God is infinitely greater. Therefore, during times of doubt, unbelief, blasphemy, malice, envy, avarice, covetousness, involuntary hypocrisy, entreat the Lord with hope, and be sure that His infinite goodness will incline Him to have mercy on you, if you turn from your wickedness.

* * *

Be charitable to the poor willingly, without suspicion, doubt, or petty inquisitiveness, remembering that in the person of the poor you do good to Christ Himself, as He Himself said: "*Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me*" (Matt 25:40). Know that your charity is nothing compared to the dignity of man, that child of God. Know that your alms are but earth and dust; know that any material charity must absolutely be accompanied by spiritual charity, which is kind, brotherly, open-hearted, loving behavior to your neighbor. Do not let him notice that you are doing him a favor; do not appear proud. "*He who gives, with liberality … he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness*" (Rom 12:8). See, then, that you do not take away the value from your material charity by not showing spiritual charity. Know that on the Day of Judgment the Master will test your good works as well. Remember that both heaven and earth are given to man, "*an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven*" (1 Pet 1:4). For man's sake, God the Father did not spare His Only-Begotten Son, but delivered Him to die. The devil, through our own cunning, hinders us in our good works.

The words of a prayer are like rain or snow if they are pronounced with faith and feeling: each of them contains inherent power and its own potential fruit. The raindrops or snowflakes falling in a continuous stream, or in isolated flakes, water the ground, and the ground brings forth fruit. Likewise, the words of a prayer, this spiritual rain—each word separately—water the soul, and it brings forth the fruits of the virtues together with the grace of the Holy Spirit, especially if accompanied by a downpour of tears.

Human charity is suspicious. It fears that it may somehow give money to a person who already has enough, or it may give too much. But the Lord's charity is different: "*The Lord is good unto all, and His mercies are upon*

all His works" (Psalm 144:9). "*For to everyone who has,*" says the Lord, "*more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away*" (Matt 25:29).

Do not indulge your lazy flesh during prayer; do not hurry. The flesh, growing weary and oppressed by holy work, hastens to finish praying, in order to rest or to occupy itself with worldly or carnal matters.

* * *

Let simplicity accompany you everywhere. Be especially simple in your faith, hope, and love, for God is a simple Being, the eternally worshipped Unity, and our soul is also simple. The flesh hinders the simplicity of our soul when we gratify it—for example, when we eat sweets, and, in general, when we eat and drink for pleasure and in excess, when we smoke, and in general when we do what pleases us, for then the flesh dominates the spirit.

* * *

How sharply are distinguished in us, on the one hand, the good spirit, the spirit of peace, consolation, joy, light—the Life-giving Spirit; and, on the other hand, the evil spirit, the spirit of constraint, weariness, despondency, darkness—the spirit that destroys our soul. The first is the Spirit of God, by which we live, spiritually breathe, move, and exist; the second is the evil spirit, Satan.

* * *

The God of Love is unchangeable, and we should also be unchangeable and constant in our love. "*Love never fails*" (Cor 13:8), but dislike, hatred, indifference, and neglect are of the devil.

Every word of the Master is spiritual or material being, because He is He Who Is, the Creator. The Master, the Lord God, is almighty, because He is an infinite Spirit, unlimited power and wisdom. Every thought of His immediately is, or can become, action and life, according to His will.

* * *

Unfortunate is he who immoderately loves the comforts of life and has surrounded himself with all possible comforts. He will shun every discomfort; he will become soft and unaccustomed to patience; but the life of the Christian is all discomfort, a narrow, rough way, a cross requiring discomfort and great patience. Therefore, O ascetic, do not seek for all sorts of comforts in your home and surroundings; do not love the comforts of this world; instead, love Christ, the bearer of the cross. Endure discomfort, accustom yourself to it: "*I have learned in whatsoever state I am, to be content*" (Phil 4:11), says the Apostle Paul. Unfortunate is he who loves adornment and seeks the decoration of his body; he will not strive as he should for the adornment of his soul with faith, love, meekness, humility, righteousness, patience. Especially unfortunate is he who seeks to be adorned with honors; he will make a shameful idol of himself, like Nebuchadnezzar. He will become proud in his bearing toward those who do not have such honors, and will insist that others bow before him "*not with costly … clothing*" (1 Tim 2:9). Even we men, like women, seek after adornment and adorn ourselves like idols, while we think but little of inward beauty, even entirely forgetting the adornment of our inward temple, the tabernacle of our soul. Unfortunate is he who loves haste, for he will meet with a multitude of obstacles, with thousands of hindrances and inward heaviness because of his hurry, and he will have many occasions for irritation. Unfortunate is he who passionately loves to eat and drink until he is overfilled, for he will indeed find, when he begins to labor for the Lord, that food and drink, if we set our heart upon them, are a heavy burden for the body. They are affliction and destruction for the spirit. Truly, man can be satisfied with a very, very small amount of simple food.

The human soul is simple, as the spirit. Therefore, it must be simple in love. In other words, it must love God as the Author from Whom it came forth, and it must love man as itself—like unto like. It should not attach itself for an instant to the things of this world, for these are not akin to it, and since they are they are not akin to our soul, the soul feels sick when it cleaves to them.

* * *

Every word of Holy Scripture, every word of the Divine Liturgy, every word of the matins and vespers, every word of the sacramental prayers and

the other prayers has inherent and appropriate power, as does the sign of the honorable and Life-giving Cross. This grace is present in every word of the Church, because the Hypostatic, Incarnate Word of God, the Head of the Church, abides in the Church. In addition, every truly good word has in itself the power corresponding to it, because of the power of the simple Word of God Who fills all things. With what attention and reverence, with what faith must we therefore pronounce every word! For the Word is the Creator Himself, God, and through the Word all things were brought into existence from nonexistence.

* * *

The Holy Mysteries are called the Holy Gifts, because they are given to us by the Lord freely, for nothing, undeservedly on our part. Instead of punishing us for our daily, countless transgressions, instead of giving us over to spiritual death, the Lord, in the Holy Mysteries, grants us forgiveness and cleansing from our sins. He gives us sanctification, the peace of our spiritual powers, healing and health of soul and body, and every blessing only according to our faith. If, then, the Lord daily gives us Himself in His Divine Mysteries, should we not therefore absolutely give to others freely, for nothing? Should we not give such perishable goods as money, food, drink, clothes to all who ask for them? How can we become angry with those who eat our bread for nothing, when we ourselves partake freely of the priceless and immortal food of the Body and Blood of the Lord? "*From him who takes away your goods do not ask them back*" (Luke 6:30).

You live in God's house (i.e., in this beautiful world), and you enjoy all the gifts of God's goodness and generosity freely given in nature. You live in God's house (i.e., in the Church), in the company of the saved, and you enjoy all the gifts of grace for your salvation. Therefore, you must also freely do good to your brothers, as much as you are able. Do good even to those who are unthankful and evil, and you will be the child of the Most High (Luke 6:35). Receive everyone willingly in your house, knowing that you yourself live freely in the house of God, in the universe, and in the spiritual house of God, the Church, which prepares you for the life eternal. Give joyfully, and let others partake freely at your table, remembering that

you, too, freely daily partake at the Lord's table of His Most-pure Body and Blood.

You say: "What can I do with my heart? It sets itself in opposition to everything true and holy; it becomes weakened by unbelief when strong faith is required; it fails when faithfulness unto death is necessary; it does not tremble, and is even ready to mock when it should tremble and fear. What can I do? What shall I do with my heart? Admit this irrevocable truth firmly, once and for all: your heart is falsehood, a very pillar of falsehood. "*All men are liars*" (Psalm 115:2), but everything in the Church, beginning with the Word of God down to the shortest prayer, is truth. "The Church" of God is "*the pillar and ground of the truth*" (1 Tim 3:15), for it is founded on the cornerstone, Christ, Who is the Truth. It is animated and eternally guided by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of truth.

The Church is the sure path to eternal life; walk along it without turning aside. Hold fast to it, and you will gain the Kingdom of Heaven, but if you turn aside at the crossways of your own self-opinion and unbelief, then you have only yourself to blame. You will go astray and be lost. "*I am the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6).

There is no doubt that in the hearts of many people the presence of the devil manifests itself in a kind of spiritual languor, paralysis, and slothfulness in every good and useful work, especially in works of faith and piety requiring attention and soberness of heart, for spiritual work in general. He strikes the heart with languor and the intellect with dullness during prayer, with coldness and indolence when it is necessary for us to do good, for instance, when we are called to have compassion on those who suffer, to help those in need, to comfort those in sorrow, to teach the ignorant, to guide the lost and sinful to the path of truth. We must constantly watch our heart, drive away from it the darkness of slothfulness and stony insensibility, and we must ensure that our heart always burns with faith and love for God and our neighbor. We must always be ready for every kind of labor and self-sacrifice for the glory of God and the salvation of our neighbor. "*Not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord*" (Rom 12:11). The devil is still ensconced in our hearts, revealed by unusually violent irritation. We sometimes fall so ill with the disease of self-love that we cannot endure the slightest contradiction or any spiritual or material obstacles. We cannot bear a single, rough, harsh word. But that is the time for endurance, when the waters of malice and impatience reach the

very depths of our souls. "*By your patience possess your souls*" (Luke 21:19). "*The rain descended, and the floods came … on that house*" (Matt 7:27). What will become of it? What will become of the man himself when the devil inundates him with the flood of his temptations and blows him over with the wind of his snares? If the Christian stands firmly on the rock, Christ, then he will not fall, but if he stands on the sand of his own carnal mind-set and passions, then great will be his fall (Matt 7:24–27).

Am I not everything to you, My worm, adorned with My image? To what, then, do you cleave? In what else do you trust? Do not leave Me, the Source of living water (of life); I am Life Itself. Our Life, the Lord, is single. If He is in the heart, it is enough. He alone sustains our life. Therefore "*man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*" (Matt 4:4).

Do not be slothful in praying fervently for others at their request, or on your own initiative, whether on your own or together with them, for you will obtain a recompense from God—the grace of God in your heart, which shall give you joy and strengthen you in faith and love for God and your neighbor. These words are true; they are taken from experience. In general, we do not pray very willingly for others, but more out of obligation and habit, and without our heart fully participating in the prayer. We must force ourselves to pray with our whole heart, with great faith, with great boldness, so that we may obtain great and rich mercy from the bountiful and greatly beneficent God! "*Let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind*" (Jas 1:6). It pleases the Lord, the common Father of all, when we pray for each other willingly with faith and love, for He is Love, ready to forgive all for their mutual love. The Holy Spirit said, "*Pray for one another, that you may be healed*" (Jas 5:16). You see how pleasing to God, and how efficacious, is the prayer of one for another.

When you are praying to God, do not imagine His nearness in any other way than that you breathe every moment in Him, that you are enlightened, sanctified, receive rest, are comforted and strengthened by Him. In a word, you live in Him, according to the Scripture: "*For in Him we live, and move, and have our being, … He gives to all life, breath, and all things*" (Acts 17:28, 25). "*God [the Word] is near you, in your mouth and in your heart … that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved*" (Rom 10:8, 9).

A Christian should pray for all Christians as he does for himself, so that God will prosper them in life, faith, and spiritual wisdom, and so that He will free them from sins and passions. Why? Because Christian love sees in all Christians its own members and members of Christ God, the common Saviour of all, and it desires for them the same benefits as it desires for itself, and it does everything it can to do unto them as it would have them do unto it.

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We have icons in our houses and venerate them in order to demonstrate, among other things, that the eyes of God and of all the heavenly dwellers are constantly fixed on us. They see not only all our acts, but our words, thoughts and desires.

* * *

I thank my mother Church for having shown me in the litanies what to pray for: "*For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us,*" in the litanies, "*with groanings which cannot be uttered*" (Rom 8:26). Glory to the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter! I believe that according to the Saviour's promise, He will dwell with us forever, He will guide us in all truth, and He will not allow those who seek God's truth zealously and humbly to fall into error. Why do we begin our prayers with the prayer to the Heavenly King, the Spirit of Truth? Because He is the teacher and giver of prayer, because He dwells with us forever and works in the world. We thank You, Lord Jesus, that for Your sake the Holy Spirit also came down from heaven into the world!

Christ is our hope, our cleansing and sanctification, our resurrection, life, and repose. He alone is what we all need; therefore, the Church constantly pronounces these words aloud so that we may hear them during memorial or funeral services and during other Church services, for we are inclined to forget the one thing needful. The passions distract our mind, memory, imagination, heart, and will. After death, all will be taken from us, all our earthly possessions—riches, honors, the beauty of the body, the beauty of our clothes, spacious dwellings, all the sweetness of food and drink; but the virtue of the soul, that incorruptible raiment, shall remain with us eternally.

Christ Himself, our eternal riches, our life and true beauty, true glory and honor, our incorruptible raiment, will eternally remain with us.

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In order for a Christian to lead a Christian life and not extinguish the life of the spirit within him, both private prayer and public prayer are absolutely necessary. It is also indispensable that he should faithfully, attentively, zealously attend divine services in the church, just as it is indispensable to pour oil into a lamp, so that it should continue to burn and not go out. However, since sincere, fervent prayer is inextricably connected with abstinence, therefore, in order to maintain the Christian life within ourselves (i.e., the ardor of faith, hope, and love), abstinence and fasting are necessary. Nothing extinguishes the spirit of faith within us as quickly as intemperance, indulgence, distraction, and a prodigal life. My spirit is quenched; I die spiritually when I do not celebrate services in the church for a whole week, and my spirit becomes inflamed. I live again in soul and heart, when I officiate, forcing myself to pray, not formally, but truly, spiritually, sincerely, ardently. But how many bodiless enemies must I then struggle against! How many wiles and attacks must I overcome! The theater also extinguishes faith and the Christian life, instructing us in distraction, cunning (worldly knowledge), a fondness for laughter and jest. It educates clever children of this world, but not children of light. The theater is the opponent of the Christian life; it is the offspring of the spirit of this world, not of the Spirit of God. True children of the Church do not frequent the theater.

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Nothing in the world is more important than the salvation of human souls, and there is no subject more worthy of unceasing and perpetual remembrance than the redemption of the world by the Son of God from sin, the curse, and eternal death. The Holy Church has engraved in her divine services, through unchangeable words, images, and rites, the whole economy of our salvation, so that people—so inclined to forget God, the salvation of their souls, and all that God has accomplished for their salvation, eternal joy, and blessedness—should constantly have before their eyes, and within their reach, God’s great, wise, and good deeds. In this way,

we are continually inspired to repentance, amendment, and salvation, and we shun the vanities of this corrupt and fleeting world. "*The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever*" (1 John 2:17).

Watch yourself continually, lest the spiritual life and spiritual wisdom dry up within you. Meditate more on what you read, sing, or hear in church (or sometimes at home). Live as the saints lived, pray as they prayed, practice virtues as they did. Live in meekness, humility, and gentleness, not sparing yourself, but renouncing yourself, your rest, ease and enjoyment, for the love of God and your neighbor, in patience, courage, and struggle. Have the faith, hope, and love of the saints. "*Let your waist be girded, and your lamps burning and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.*" (Luke 12:35–36).

If you read worldly magazines and newspapers and derive some profit from them as a citizen, a Christian, and the head of a family, then you should read the Gospel and the writings of the Holy Fathers even more often, for it would be sinful for a Christian, who reads worldly writings, not to read Divinely inspired ones. If you follow the events of the outer world, do not lose sight of your inner world, your own soul—it is nearer and dearer to you. To read only worldly magazines and newspapers means only to live with one part of the soul, and not with the whole soul, or to live by the flesh alone, and not by the spirit. Everything worldly will come to pass with the world itself. And "*the world is passing away, and the lust of it [all its devices]; but he who does the will of God abides forever*" (1 John 2:17).

Attachment to outward things immediately causes coldness toward God and the work of our salvation; it causes coldness toward our neighbor, or even hatred and envy toward him, if we depend on him for anything and he does not give them to us, or if we are obliged to give them to him against our will. Therefore, it is well to be perfectly indifferent to external things, lest we have any occasion for enmity toward our neighbor, which is a great sin. Remain removed from all attachments to this perishable, vain, fleeting world. Live with your heart in heaven, and love the incorruptible blessings prepared for those who love God and their neighbor.

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A priest, like an angel of the Almighty Lord, should be above all passions and spiritual disturbances, above all worldly, vain attachments and all fears occasioned by demons. He must be encompassed in God, he must love and fear Him alone. The presence of merely human fear means that the priest does not yet entirely cleave to God.

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Pay no attention to the physical beauty of your face, but instead look attentively with your inner vision at the face of your soul. Is it disfigured by the passions? If it is, destroy this disfigurement through prayer and tearful repentance. Pay no attention to beautiful clothes. They are corruption! Instead, consider the incorruptible raiment of your soul, in what state it is. Is it hideous and impure, owing to frequent transgressions, both secret and evident? If so, strive to clothe your soul in the imperishable beauty of meekness, humility, chastity, purity, mercy, and righteousness.

* * *

"I believe in one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church." Do you believe that all Orthodox Christians are members of one and the same body, and that therefore we must all "*keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Eph 4:3), care for one another, help one another? Do you believe that the saints are likewise members of the one body of Christ, the Church, and are our brothers, interceding for us before God in heaven? Do you respect every Christian as a member of Christ, as His brother in humanity? Do you love everybody as yourself, as your own flesh and blood? Do you generously forgive offenses? Do you help others in need, if you yourself have money? Do you teach the ignorant? Do you turn the sinner from the error of his ways? Do you comfort those who are sorrowing? Faith in the Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church inspires, obliges you to do all this, and for all this you are promised a great reward from the Head of the Church—our Lord Jesus Christ.

Through our attachment to perishable things, by thinking and caring for them, we lose sight of objects of the greatest importance, of objects natural to our souls, constituting their true and eternal element. We dig for ourselves "*broken cisterns that can hold no water,*" and forsake "*the Fountain of living waters*" (Jer 2:13); we do not make spiritual, holy,

heavenly, and life-giving thoughts into our life-blood, but we continue to live through worldly, earthly, passionate thoughts and aspirations, which only oppress, torment, and slay us. O, if we could ever reason, as the Gospel teaches us, as the holy Church teaches us in her divine services, prayers, sacraments, and other offices, as the Holy Fathers did in their writings! Then even upon earth we would all become citizens of heaven. We would have heaven within us.

The Divine Liturgy is truly a heavenly service on earth, during which God Himself, in a particular, immediate, and intimate manner, is present and dwells with men, being Himself the invisible celebrant of the service, the One offering and the One being offered. There is nothing holier, higher, grander, more solemn, more life-giving on this earth than the Liturgy. During this incredible event, the Church becomes heaven on earth. Those who celebrate represent Christ Himself, the angels, the cherubim, seraphim, and apostles. The Liturgy is the continually repeated solemnization of God's love for mankind and His all-powerful mediation for the salvation of the whole world (and each human being individually). The marriage of the Lamb is the marriage of the King's Son, in which the bride is every faithful soul; and the celebrant of the marriage is the Holy Spirit. How prepared, pure, elevated our souls must be to assist at the Liturgy, lest we be counted among those who, having no wedding garment, but a garment defiled by passions, were bound hand and foot and cast out from the marriage feast into the outer darkness. Unfortunately, in our days, many do not even consider it necessary to assist at the Liturgy at all; others only go out of habit and go away in the same state of mind as they came, without elevated thoughts, without a contrite heart, with an unrepentant soul, without the determination to change. Some stand in church irreverently, inattentively, without any concentration of mind, without preparing themselves at home by contemplation and abstinence. Some even contrive to get drunk and overeat before the Liturgy. When the glory of the Lord descended to Mt Sinai, the Hebrew people were ordered to previously prepare and cleanse themselves. In the divine service, we experience an event no less awesome than God's descent to Mt Sinai. It is even a greater event: here before us is the very face of God the lawgiver. When the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush on Mt Horeb, he was ordered to take off his shoes, but here is a greater manifestation of God than on Horeb. There we encountered only the Prototype; here is God Himself. O, how we cling to earthly things! We

do not even wish to devote a single hour exclusively to God! Even during the Divine, Most-heavenly Liturgy, we allow ourselves to think and dream of earthly things, and we fill our souls with images and desires for earthly things, sometimes—alas!—even with impure images. This we do when we should be praying ardently, zealously contemplating this great mystery, repenting of our sins, longing and praying to be cleansed, sanctified, enlightened, renewed, and strengthened in the Christian life and in the fulfillment of Christ's commandments. This we do when we should be praying for the living and dead, for the Liturgy is a sacrifice of propitiation, thanksgiving, praise, and prayer. Wondrous is the Liturgy! In it we commemorate the life, not of just any great man, but of God Incarnate, Who suffered and died for us, Who rose again, ascended into heaven, and Who shall come again to judge the whole world!

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What is false gratitude to God? Gratitude is false when, having received bountiful, undeserved spiritual and material gifts from God, we thank God with our mouths alone and use God's gifts only for our own advantage, not sharing them with our neighbors. Gratitude is false when we obtain gifts and immediately conceal them in our treasuries, chests, libraries, thereby depriving many of our brothers of spiritual enlightenment, instruction, consolation, food, drink, clothing, dwelling, treatment for their diseases, the ability to move from place to place to acquire means of subsistence. Such gratitude is false and impious. It means we thank God with our mouths, but show extreme ingratitude and an evil disposition. But so many of us are grateful—or, rather, ungrateful—in exactly this way!

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Our corrupt nature is inclined to quickly forget everything holy and salvific, because sins and passions continually cloud and darken our heads and hearts, occupying them, dominating them, thrusting out remembrances, thoughts, and feelings about holy events and God's great benefits to us. Therefore, the Holy Church, faithful guardian of her Lord's commandments, all His teaching and works, eternally grateful for His unspeakable benefits, has instituted the daily (as well as festal) celebration, with vivid, impressive, symbolic rites, of all the salvific events of the life

and acts of our Lord Jesus Christ, the economy of His salvation in the Old and in the New Testament, the creation of the visible and invisible world by Him, as well as events from the life of His most-pure Mother, Who so gloriously served the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The Church also solemnizes events from the life of His Forerunner, as well as the lives of the apostles, prophets, hierarchs, martyrs, monastic Fathers, unmercenaries, righteous ones, and all the saints who pleased and served God in every way—all these countless witnesses to the Lord, to the truth and salvation of the Divine Orthodox faith, and to all His Divine teachings, who have inherited life eternal according to His promise. This is useful and necessary to strengthen our faith, hope, and love. This is indispensible for the spiritual education of all Christianity and for constantly reminding Christians of the dogmas of faith and all the virtues, such as loyalty, courage, patience, meekness, kindness, humility, nonacquisitiveness, abstinence, purity, chastity, and others. The lives of the Lord, His most-pure Mother, and all the saints give us vivid examples of all the virtues. By fulfilling them, a Christian can become well pleasing to God and save his own soul, as well as the souls of his brothers.

* * *

The science of sciences is to conquer the sin dwelling in us, the passions acting in us. For example, it is great wisdom not to be angry with anyone or anything, not to think evil of anyone, even if someone has done us harm, but to excuse him in every way. It is wisdom to despise money, luxuries, but instead to love nonacquisitiveness and simplicity in food and drink, combined with constant moderation. It is wisdom not to flatter anyone, but to speak the truth fearlessly to everybody. It is wisdom not to be charmed by beauty of a person, but to respect in all, whether they be handsome or ugly, the beauty of the image of God, which is present equally in all. It is wisdom to love your enemies and not to exact vengeance on them either by word, thought, or deed. It is wisdom not to gather wealth for ourselves, but to give it to the poor, in order to gain for ourselves "*a treasure in the heavens that does not fail*" (Luke 12:33). Alas! We have studied nearly all the sciences, but we have not learned the science of avoiding sins, and we often show ourselves entirely ignorant of this moral science. Thus it follows that the truly wise, the truly learned were the holy, true disciples of the true

teacher, Christ, while all of us so-called learned men are actually ignorant. The more learned we are, the worse is our ignorance, because we do not know and do not do the one thing needful, but only serve our love of self, love of fame, love of sensuality, and love of money.

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How indifferent a priest must be to earthly things, so that he, when celebrating the wondrous and heavenly sacraments, will not be ensnared by the enemy, but will always burn with pure love for God and his fellow men who are lost through sins and are saved by the grace of Christ in the Holy Spirit! But how deeply has sin become ingrained in us! How strong are our earthly attachments! Even when celebrating the sacraments, we sometimes, through being accustomed to them, do not completely lay aside worldly cares and attachments, and therefore the enemy disturbs, darkens, and perverts our mind, binds our heart, and takes us prisoner. And deservedly so! Do not lose yourself in daydreams. A priest should be an angel in the elevation of his thoughts, in the purity of his soul and body, in the ardor of his love for God, the Creator of all things and the Saviour, in his love for all mankind, his brothers.

To love God with all your heart means to love with meekness, humility, purity, chastity, wisdom, truth, mercy, obedience with your entire soul for the sake of God, and never to act against to these virtues. In other words, it means never to become proud, irritated, angry with anyone, never to commit adultery, even in the heart, never to violate chastity, either by look, thought, or gesture, to avoid every inconsiderate, needless word and deed, to shun every iniquity, to hate avarice and covetousness, to flee from self-will and disobedience.

* * *

The passions spur us on like cruel drivers, daily forcing us, through our love for earthly things, to act in opposition to the Lord and against our own true welfare, and to do that which is pleasing to the deluder, Satan.

* * *

I thank You, my joy, Lord of glory, for assuming my image through Your Incarnation from the most-pure Virgin, and for honoring, raising, and deifying mankind. I thank You for raising me from corruption to incorruption, for cleansing my impurities, for healing my sicknesses, for turning my sorrow into joy, the constraint of sin into the freedom of Your justification, for through faith and heartfelt penitence You drive away the darkness of the passions and bestow Your spiritual light. You take away disturbance and send down peace from above. You take away faintheartedness and bestow courage and daring. Glory to Your mercy!

* * *

As I look at the icons in the church—Your Holy Icon, my Lord, that of Your Most-pure Mother, those of the holy angels and archangels, and the faces of the saints, adorned, resplendent with gold and silver—I think to myself how You have honored and adorned our nature, O Creator and Provider of all! Your saints shine with Your light; they are sanctified by Your grace, having conquered sin and washed away the sinful impurities of body and spirit; they shine with Your glory; they are incorruptible through Your incorruptibility. Glory to You for having so honored, enlightened, and raised our nature! Here are Your apostles and hierarchs, living images of You, the great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Messenger of the Father, Hierarch and Chief of Shepherds. Your goodness, wisdom, might, spiritual beauty, power, and holiness shine in them. Here are Your martyrs, who by Your strength overcame terrible temptations and endured fearful tortures; they have washed the garments of their souls white in Your blood. Here are Your venerable ones, who by fasting, vigilance, and prayer obtained Your wonderful gifts, the gifts of healing, of discernment. Your might strengthened them to stand above sin and the snares of the devil. Your likeness shines forth in them like the sun.

* * *

In the church and its decoration the whole divine economy of salvation is presented in images, faces, general outlines, as on a chart. We see this in the icons, in the divine services, in the reading of the Holy Scriptures, the singing, the rites, the entire Old Testament, New Testament, and Church history. Grand is the spectacle of a divine service in our Orthodox Church

for those who understand it, who penetrate into its essence, its spirit, its meaning!

* * *

Sensualist! What will be the object of your love after your death, when you will lose all carnal delights, and their place is filled by the bitterness of deprivation? What sustenance will remain for your immortal soul? Carnal delights will all pass away. Lover of money! What will be the object of your heart's love when, with your death, you lose the possession and enjoyment of your money and treasures? Your soul, a spiritual being, will no longer require these treasures. They will be repugnant to it, like poison, like the rust and rottenness that corrupted it during its lifetime, estranging it from God and depriving it of the incorruptible treasure that is God. Proud, ambitious man! You who seek distinctions and honors, and love them above everything else in the world! What will be the object of your love when death divests you of all your distinctions and reveals your true nakedness and deformity? What will then be food and life for the imperishable spirit that has withdrawn from God for the sake of the vain honors of this world, making an idol of perishable things, like the pagans of old? This is how rudderless the man subject to passions becomes—he does not understand what he does, what deprivations he prepares for himself, what torments await for his foolish passions. He has no idea that after having been honored by the likeness of God, by the dignity of being a child of God, a friend of God, an heir of the heavenly kingdom, a joint heir with Christ, by his foolishness "*he shall be compared unto the brute beasts*" (Psalm 48:12), that perish, in greed, in his mad sensuality, in anger, in envy! Therefore, beware attaching yourself with your whole soul to anything earthly.

Imagery and symbolism are a necessity of human nature in our present spiritually sensual condition. They are able to vividly express many things belonging to the spiritual world that are simply unattainable without images and symbols. It was for this reason that the Divine teacher, the Hypostatic Wisdom Who created all things, the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, often taught men using images or parables. It is for this reason also that in our Orthodox Church it is customary to represent many things by imagery. For instance, we represent the Lord Himself, the most-pure Mother of God, the angels and saints on icons, so that we may conform our lives, our

thoughts, words, and deeds, to the model of the thoughts, words, and deeds of the Lord and His saints. This is also why we frequently make the sign of the cross, use incense, burn candles and lamps, process in and out of the altar. This is why we bow our head and prostrate our face to the ground (for we have fallen deeply through sin). All these remind us of spiritual realities. Imagery greatly influences the human soul, its creative or active capacity. Thus, it is said that, if during pregnancy a mother often looks at the face or portrait of her beloved husband, then the child is born looking like the father, or if she often looks at the portrait of a beautiful child, her child will be beautiful. Thus, if a Christian often gazes with love and reverence at the image of our Lord Jesus Christ, His most-pure Mother, and the saints, his soul will adopt the spiritual features of the face lovingly contemplated (such as meekness, humility, mercy, and abstinence). If we contemplated these images more often, and if we meditate on the life of the Lord and His saints, we would change a great deal, rising from strength to strength! Also, the fragrance of incense in church and in our houses reminds us of the fragrance of virtue, and, by contrast, of the foul stink of sins, thereby teaching those who are attentive to inward feelings to avoid the stench of the passions: intemperance, fornication, malice, envy, pride, despair, and others, and to adorn themselves with every Christian virtue. The incense reminds us of the Apostle Paul's words: "*For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life*" (2 Cor 2:15, 16). Likewise, the candles and lamps burning in church remind us of spiritual light and fire. They remind us of the Lord's words: "*I am come as a light into the world, that whosoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness*" (John 12:46), as well as "*I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!*" (Luke 12:49). and "*Let your waist be girded and your lights burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately*" (Luke 12:35, 36). Also: "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven*" (Matt 5:16). The physical objects by their very nature teach us about spiritual objects corresponding to light and fire: for instance, our hearts should always be burning with love for God and our neighbor. Also, we should not let the passions or the fire of Gehenna be kindled within us. By

the example of our virtuous life we should light others, as a candle illuminating the darkness.

It is natural for us to have images of Christ, His most-pure Mother, the angels, and saints. First of all, it is a requirement of our nature: we always wish to have before us an image of our Beloved, an image of our Benefactor, so that we may remember Him and His benefactions (worship Him) more often, the same as we do with living persons, especially with those whom we love and respect. Secondly, we are created in the image and likeness of God; therefore, it is natural for us to wish to have our own Prototype, our first principle, the Lord God, before our eyes in these images, in which He was pleased to manifest Himself to men, so that we should remember Him, His constant presence with us, His providence as often as possible. This way, we can express our reverence, gratitude, and love for Him in visible signs or ceremonies, for we are bodily creatures and we need material representations, material ceremonies. It was certainly for this reason that the Lord Himself appeared to His saints—to Abraham in the form of three strangers under the oak of Mamre, to Isaiah in the form of a great king sitting upon an exalted throne, to the prophet Daniel in the form of the Ancient of Days and the Son of Man brought before Him. Had not the visible image of the invisible God been necessary, He certainly would not have appeared in a visible manner. He would not have come down to earth in our flesh. He would not have taken the form of a servant. David says: "*Seek His face always*" (Psalm 104:4). For this reason, we venerate pictures of the most-pure Mother of God, of the angels and saints and keep them in our houses, because they are living images and likenesses of God. As we look at their icons, we remember more vividly their great deeds, virtues, benefactions, their ardent love for God, and we thus become inspired to imitate them in their constant vigilance over themselves. We are inspired to begin to cleanse ourselves from every impurity of body and spirit, and we glorify their exploits. By doing this, we make them our intercessors and protectors before God, for God deigns to accept the intercession of His friends and faithful servants on behalf of those for whom they intercede before Him. Since we are not bodiless spirits, but physical beings covered with flesh, having material dimensions and a physical image, it is natural that we should seek images of invisible beings. Indeed, condescending to our infirmity, the Lord gave the angels power to take our form upon themselves and appear to us (when He wills) in our

image, as, for instance, when the archangel appeared to Joshua, the son of Nun, to David, to Manoah and Hannah, to Zacharias, to the most-pure Virgin Mary, and to other saints of the Old and New Testaments. Do we not ourselves prove in our daily life this requirement of our nature, this longing to have pictures of the people we love, when we have their portraits taken, when we hang them on our walls or place them in albums in order to look at them more soften, and to enjoy contemplating these respected and beloved faces? And this natural, right, and pious veneration of the holy icons is regarded by many Lutherans and Anglicans as something unnatural, repugnant to God, as idolatry and heresy. They do not have icons either in their homes or even in their churches, considering it to be a sin to own them and venerate them. Through this, they lose much in faith and piety, for by breaking the visible connection with the saints, they likewise destroy the invisible union, while the heavenly and earthly Church together form one body. Using the same reasoning, they have broken their connection with the departed, because they do not pray for them and do not offer sacrifices for their souls, sacrifices which are well-pleasing to the merciful God. Thus, they prove their doubt in the power of the prayers of the Church for the departed. What kind of a Church is this that has unwisely and brazenly broken her ties with the heavenly, triumphant Church, and has interrupted communion in prayer with the departed, and have broken off communion with the Church that professes the faith in Christ in its original purity? Is it the living and holy body of the Church? Can a single trunk of the body, without head, without hands and feet, without eyes and ears, be called a living body? And yet, such a community proclaims its faith to be the purified, true faith, and eschews the rites of our holy, spotless religion. Is this a pure religion if it has rejected the Sacrament of Ordination and all other sacraments except Baptism and Holy Communion (their Communion, incidentally, is not valid)? Is it pure if it has rejected the veneration of the saints, their relics, icons, fasting, monasticism, and prayers for the departed? Is this the faith of the Gospel? Is this the Church of Christ and the Apostles? No! It is a self-made Church, formed by the will of men, under the influence of human passions, and with the intention of pleasing human passions. It is "*the truth in unrighteousness*" (Rom 1:18); it is the perverted Gospel of Christ; it is the turning away of Christ's people "unto another gospel," concerning which the Apostle Paul said: "*But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have*

preached to you, let him be accursed" (Gal 1:6, 8). It is not a Church, but a soul-destroying mutilation of the Body of Christ. Therefore, the veneration of icons is natural, righteous, pleasing to God, and profitable.

The holy angels and God's saints are our best, kindest, truest brothers, and friends who help us so often in various circumstances, when no other people can help us. Since these brothers, who eternally live and give us benefits, are invisible, and since we, because of our corporality, wish to have them before our eyes, as though always present with us, we make images of them. As we look at these images, we remember that they are with us, and so we call upon them in our prayers, knowing that they have great boldness before God, and they help us in various circumstances. Thus, the veneration of icons is very beneficial for us, corresponding with our nature and with common sense, as well as with the Holy Scriptures themselves, for there were images of the cherubim in Moses' tabernacle of the Old Testament. Icons serve as a constant reminder to us that the Lord is always with us ("*I am with you always, even unto the end of the world*" [Matt 28:20]), that the most-holy Mother of God is always near us as the "*First-Origin of the spiritual renovation*"[38] of the Church, the Mother by grace of all true Christians. Therefore, all true Christians have images of the Mother of God, their Queen and Mother by grace, in their homes, and often they abundantly, worthily, and properly adorn them with silver, gold, and precious stones, for, after God, there is no one dearer and more revered by Christians than His most-pure Mother. Both the Lord Himself and His most-pure Mother continually prove to us through their miracles, both inwardly and externally, that our true veneration of His saints, and His Mother, and His holy icons, is pleasing to Him and profitable to us in the highest degree.

The Nativity of Christ. He has come to earth, He Who in the beginning created us from earth and breathed His Divine breath into us. He Who "*gives to all life, breath, and all things*" (Acts 17:25) has come. He Who by a single word called all things visible and invisible from nonexistence into existence has come. He Who by a word called into being birds, fishes, quadrupeds, insects, and all creatures, existing under His almighty providence and care has come. He has come, He Whom the innumerable hosts of angels continually serve with fear and joy. And in what humility has He come! He is born of a poor Virgin, in a cave, wrapped in poor swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. Riches, honors, glory of this

world! Fall down, fall down in humility, tearful devotion, and profound gratitude before the Saviour of men, and share your riches with the poor and needy. Do not pride yourselves on your illusory, fleeting distinctions, for true distinction can only be found in virtue. Glory of this world! Learn here, before the manger, how vain you are. Let us all humble ourselves; let us all fall down in the dust before the boundless humility and exhaustion of the Sovereign of all, God Who has come to heal our infirmities, to save us from pride, vanity, corruption, and every sinful impurity.

Sin, in itself, is fire. This is why we say that such or such a person is inflamed by anger, or by carnal love, or by envy. Sin bears in itself a fiery condemnation. How great, then, will this fire be in sinners when through their impenitence the grace of God entirely leaves them! What will the external manifestation of this fire be? There is no doubt that there will be a lake of fire, the fiery furnace, the Gehenna of fire, the valley of fire. All these truly exist. And we in our insensibility do not fear, do not tremble. We spend our lives in enjoyment; we are cold toward the Church; we do not fulfill our Christian duties; we stagnate in our sins. How terrible it will be for us!

* * *

Our priestly duty is to repeat over and over again the same prayers (they are very diverse), beginning with the Lord's Prayer "Our Father," and it is the duty of all people in general to fulfill the commandments of the divine, moral law. It is not through the variety of prayers that the soul is strengthened, but by repetition, when we incorporate them fully into our hearts, our will, our actions, our whole life.

* * *

Avoid every occasion, cause, and word that produces enmity, and avail yourself of every opportunity and occasion to show holy and sincere love. By doing the first, the evil disposition of the soul will little by little be eradicated, and by doing the second, love will be nourished and strengthened. Do not allow yourself for a moment to have an angry heart. Always be kind to everyone, conquering your evil disposition with the love that endures all things and conquers all things. Avoid obstinacy, self-will,

and antagonizing your neighbor. Do not persist in having your own way, in order to satisfy your caprice, or in order to intentionally injure anyone.

* * *

A single commandment was given to Adam and Eve, in order that by fulfilling this one commandment—which was, moreover, a very easy one—mankind might acquire the habit of doing the will of God, which is the only guarantee of well-being that creatures have, and might be strengthened in the love of God. If we instead look at the opposite—the nonfulfillment of the will of the Creator and the fulfillment of our own will, in opposition to the Creator's—we observe that little by little a person changes for the worse and perverts his own high nature, created in the image and likeness of God, becoming God's enemy. So important is the fulfillment of God's commandments, and so destructive is their nonfulfillment! By giving to the first men His definite commandment not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, the Lord God revealed Himself as the guide of the newly created reasonable creatures, His children by adoption. Whose fault was it that this guidance was rejected, that man preferred to be governed by his own will? Even until now, notwithstanding all progress in sciences and arts, notwithstanding all treasures of human wisdom, neither the man of ancient times nor modern man can educate himself morally, because he rejected, even from the beginning, the guidance of God. Tell me, who can be our guide except God? In the past, only those who trusted in God and lived according to His commandments could successfully complete their spiritual and moral education; in the present, only those who live according to the Gospel and the teaching of the Church, submitting themselves to her guidance can become morally perfect. This is useful for all teachers to remember. We have many sciences, but the result obtained is small: our youth have much in their heads, but in their hearts they have little—very little, and often (alas!) nothing at all. The essence of life, then, is not education and science. But "*though I … understand all mysteries and all knowledge, … but have not love, … it profits me nothing*" (1 Cor 13:2, 3).

* * *

The Church, through the church building and divine services, acts upon the entire man, educates him completely. It influences his sight, hearing,

smell, touch, taste, imagination, mind, and will by the splendor of the icons and of the whole church building, by the ringing of bells, by the singing of the choir, by the fragrance of the incense, by the veneration of the Gospel, the cross, and the holy icons, by the prosphoras, and the sweet sound of the readings of the Scriptures.

* * *

Our prayer must be deep, sincere, wise, and fruitful; it must change our heart, direct our will to good, diverting us from evil. Superficial prayer is hypocrisy, blasphemy, vanity. "*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me*" (Matt 15:8).

When praying to the Mother of God, the angels, and the saints, we recognize them as the one mysterious body of the Church, to which we ourselves also belong, though we are sinful. We believe that out of love they pray to God for our salvation. When we pray fervently for the various classes of society, for citizens of our earthly country, and for the whole world, we recognize ourselves also as belonging to one great body, through the spirit of love and good will toward all. Finally, when praying for the repose of the souls of the departed (in heaven, upon earth,[39] and in hell), we consider them also as forming one spiritual body with ourselves, and we desire peace and rest for them in the immortal country, acknowledging that their souls continue to live, and that we ourselves—perhaps very soon—shall join them. This is the fruit of the faith of Christ—the union of love with all, with those in heaven, on earth, and in hell. How exalted is the spirit of the Church! O, if we could raise ourselves to this spirit! Penetrate into the spirit of the Orthodox divine services, into the spirit of the litanies, the sacraments, rites, and be imbued with it yourselves. It will be terrible for those who have withdrawn themselves from the Church: they will become completely possessed by the spirit of the world, by the spirit of evil.

Only faithful servants of Christ truly value the Incarnation of the Son of God and the care of God the Father and the All-holy Trinity for the salvation of mankind. Only they truly value the Most-pure Body and Blood of Christ, while men of this world live like the beasts that have no understanding, in worldly sorrows and in sensual pleasures, not valuing either the Incarnation of the Son of God or His Most-pure Mysteries. And

since God’s chosen ones duly value the works of God and His infinite love for this adulterous and sinful world, God Himself values them and accomplishes wonderful deeds through them. The Holy Spirit, together with the Father and the Son, dwells in them, and out of their bellies flow rivers of living water. Those who know God go to them to drink of this water, as though to sweet springs. Let us all become true servants of Christ.

* * *

The sun shines. The noetic Sun, God, unceasingly shines in the souls of the chosen.

* * *

God resides in the saints, even in their names, even in their images. It is only necessary to venerate their images with faith, and they will work miracles.

* * *

Grant unto me, most-holy Virgin, purity of heart, simple, heartfelt, and filial trust, devotion, and love for You, both now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

* * *

The Liturgy is a vivid representation, through images, various objects, words, and actions, of the birth, life, teaching, commandments, miracles, and prophecies, suffering, crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven of the Founder of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son of God. During the Liturgy He Himself invisibly assists, He Himself acts and accomplishes everything through the priest and deacon, who are only His instruments.

* * *

It is as easy as breathing for a believer to attract the Holy Spirit to himself. Like air, He fills and penetrates all things, “Who art everywhere

present and fillest all things.” He who prays fervently draws the Holy Spirit into himself and prays by the Holy Spirit.

* * *

Prayer is the breath of the soul, just as air is for the body. We breathe by the Holy Spirit. You cannot say a single word of prayer with the whole heart without the help of the Holy Spirit. When praying, you are conversing face to face with the Lord, and if your heart is open with faith and love, then it is as though you breathed into yourself, from Him, the spiritual blessings you prayed for, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

* * *

What is our life? It is the burning of a candle. He Who gave it has but to blow, and it goes out. What is our life? It is the way of a pilgrim. As soon as he reaches its end, the gates are opened to him, he lays aside his travelling cloak (the body) and his staff, and he enters into his home. What is our life? It is prolonged, bloody warfare for the possession of the true country and true freedom. When the war is over, we shall be either the conquerors or the conquered. We shall be called from the place of combat to the place of reward, and we shall obtain from the Giver of Rewards our eternal reward —either eternal glory or eternal punishment, eternal shame.

* * *

Man is a wonderful, grand creation of God, especially if he is holy. He is a star of God; he is a splendid flower, wholly beautiful and pure, a sweet-smelling cedar-tree, a priceless pearl, a precious stone, a beautiful, fruitful tree of God’s paradise. Man is truly a wonderful creature of God! Glory to his Creator and Providence! Glory to the Saviour of mankind, Who draws us out of the mire of the passions, from corruption and death, and leads us into life eternal!

* * *

I thank the Lord and my holy mother the Church, the spotless and incorruptible bride of Christ, for having indicated, cleared, prepared the true

path to salvation, cutting off all heresies and schisms (at the Local and Ecumenical Councils) that might have become great obstacles and hindrances to our salvation in God. I thank You for having valiantly, gloriously, and victoriously overcome all the persecutors of the faith, and for standing in defense of the royal path of the holy truth that leads to life eternal. I thank You for having preserved all the sacraments instituted by the Lord, leading me by a sure path to salvation. I thank You for having instituted for me the splendid divine services—that angelic service on earth, for yearly celebrating all the most important events in the earthly life of my Lord and of His most-pure Mother, for the due and grateful remembrance of God's unutterable benefits, manifested in our redemption by the Son of God from sin, the curse, and death, and for daily representing, in the Divine Liturgy, the entire earthly life of my Lord for me to attend to reverently. I thank You for glorifying, in the daily divine services, the exploits of God's saints, and for pointing them out to me as living examples of faith, hope, and love for God, and of the various ways leading to eternal life. I thank You, my holy mother, for the writings of the Holy Fathers and teachers of the Church, for their sweet and soul-saving words, left as an inheritance to us. I thank You for the divinely instituted priesthood, accomplishing in Christ and through Christ my own salvation, reconciling me with God, sanctifying, comforting, strengthening me, pasturing me and leading me into the heavenly fold.

* * *

Do not despair in the time of violent temptations, sorrows, sicknesses, or obstacles arising from the confusion of the enemy—all this is the reproof and chastisement of the righteous Lord, Who tests our hearts for your cleansing, awaking, and amendment, for burning the thorns of carnal passions. Therefore, do not complain if you sometimes suffer greatly. Do not think of the suffering, but consider the blessed consequences of this chastisement and the health of your soul. What would you not do for the health of your body? Still more must you bear everything for the health and salvation of your soul, which has eternal life.

* * *

Do not put your trust in money, but in God, Who unwearyingly cares for all, most of all for His reasonable creatures endued with speech, especially for those who live piously. Believe that His hand does not fail, especially for those who are charitable, for man cannot be more bountiful than God. Your own life and the lives of all those who lived before and were charitable serve as a proof of this. Let God alone be the treasure of your heart; cleave wholly to Him as one created after His image and likeness, and flee from earthly corruption, continually contaminating our souls and bodies. Hasten toward the life that does not pass away, toward the life that never ages. Draw all others to that life as well, as far as lies in your power.

* * *

Lord! teach me to bestow charity willingly, kindly, joyfully, and to believe that by bestowing it I lose nothing, but gain infinitely more than what I give. Turn my eyes away from hard-hearted people who do not sympathize with the poor, who meet poverty with indifference, who judge, reproach, brand it with shameful names. These people try to weaken my heart, so that I would stop doing good, and my heart would begin to turn cruel against the poor. O, my Lord, how many such people we meet! Lord, amend our charitable works! Lord, grant that every charity I bestow may be profitable and may do no harm! Lord, accept my alms in the person of Your poor. Lord, deign to help me build a house for the poor in this town, concerning which I have already many times prayed to You, the All-merciful, Almighty, Most-wise, Wonderful! (The house has since been built.)

* * *

As you look at the icons of Christ the Saviour, His most-pure Mother, and God’s saints, imagine what glory envelops our nature in God’s mercy, wisdom, and power. Imagine what glory, what blessedness, awaits all the Lord’s faithful servants. Forsake all irrational desires and worldly attachments, earthly corruption and dross. Love the Lord and the holy law of His Gospel with all your heart, with all your soul, and aspire to the honor of God’s heavenly calling, to life eternal that never ages.

* * *

If only we turned our attention to the consequences, either of our sins or our good works! How careful we would then be to shun sin, and how zealous to do good! For we would then clearly see that every sin not eradicated in time becomes strengthened by habit, becomes deeply rooted in a man's heart, and sometimes troubles, torments, and wounds him until death, becoming, so to speak, awakened and revived in him at every occasion that reminds him of the sin formerly committed, thereby defiling his thoughts, feelings, and conscience a second time. Streams of tears are necessary to wash away the ingrained filthiness of sin. How tenacious and malignant it is! On the contrary, every virtuous action, done at any time with sincerity, without thought for financial gain, or even habituated by repetition, gives joy to our hearts and becomes the source of our life's constant joy and consolation through the knowledge that we have not spent our life entirely in vain, full of sins though it is. Virtuous deeds assure us that we are men, not beasts, that we, too, are created in the image of God, and that there is a spark of the divine light and love in us. We are assured that, although they are but few, our good works will form a counterbalance for our evil deeds on the scales of God's just righteousness.

* * *

I am moved by the spirit of holy love for all mankind that imbues all the prayers, supplications, petitions, thanksgiving, psalmody, and readings in the divine services of our Orthodox Church. O, how perfect must a priest become! He is the instrument of the divine heavenly mother on earth, who unceasingly cares with such love for all her children, from the sovereign down to the lowliest peasant, from the holy governing Synod to the lowliest of the Church clergy, and not only for her true children, but also for the whole world! How full of love for all must the priest be—this child of the Church, whom she has invested with the grace of the priesthood, and who draws so near to the throne of God, as one of her faithful, as the friend of God, whom she has honored, upon whom she has bestowed such great spiritual gifts and privileges, whom she has crowned with glory and honor as a bridegroom of the Church, as the servant of Christ the King, of God the Saviour, and as the pastor of souls! How far removed from him should all the passions be—partiality, self-love, sensual, carnal love, pride, enmity, love of money, slothfulness, despondency, complaining, and other passions!

He should be penetrated and filled with divine love for all, and his most important work should be to stand without sin before the throne of God, to uplift his reverent hands for the sake of all mankind, and to save, early and late, the souls entrusted to him, redeemed by the priceless Blood of Christ. "*And who is sufficient for these things?"* (2 Cor 2:16). May the Lord in the multitude of His mercies grant these things to us! For by ourselves we are cold, self-loving, malevolent, covetous, despondent, full of complaints, and slothful.

* * *

What is the meaning of the exclamation so often sung in church: "Lord, have mercy upon us"? It is the lament of the guilty, condemned sinner, imploring forgiveness before an irritated justice. We are all under the eternal curse and doomed to eternal fire for our countless sins, and it is only the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, interceding for us before the Heavenly Father, that saves us from eternal punishment. It is the lament of the repentant sinner, expressing his firm intention to amend and begin a new life, proper for a Christian. It is the lament of the repentant sinner, ready to forgive others, as he himself was and is immeasurably forgiven by God, the Judge of his deeds.

* * *

Passion is fiery, agitated, foolish, evil, impetuous. Therefore, a person under the influence of passion such as anger says a great deal that is inconsiderate, untrue, imagined, evil, none of which he would say when calm. And thus, knowing by experience that this is the nature of passions, first of all do not speak when agitated or angry. Secondly, forgive those who are hot-tempered and irritated when they pour forth abuse and reproaches, whether just or unjust.

* * *

In the same way that light and heat are inseparable from the sun, holiness, instruction, love, and compassion for all should be inseparable from the person of a priest, for Whose dignity does he bear? The dignity of Christ. Of Whom does he so often communicate? Christ, God Himself, in

His Body and Blood. Therefore, a priest should be a spiritual sun to his flock, as the sun is in nature. He should be light and warmth for everyone.

* * *

The Saviour deigned to become incarnate, not only to save us when sins and passions have already overcome us, when he have already been ensnared, but also in order to save us (if we pray) when sins and passions are still only beginning to enter into us, when they only begin their attack. We must not be sleepy or disheartened when the passions attack us. On the contrary, this is the very time to be watchful, to take courage and pray to Christ to prevent our fall into sin. The time to save a house from fire is not when the fire has already spread, but when the flame has only appeared. It is the same with the soul. The soul is the house, and the passions are the fire. "*Nor give place to the devil*" (Eph 4:27).

* * *

Do not fear struggle, and do not flee from it: where there is no struggle, there is no virtue. When our faithfulness and love are not tested, we cannot be certain that we truly are faithful and love the Lord. Our faith, trust, and love are proved and revealed in adversities, that is, in difficult and grievous outward and inward circumstances, during sickness, sorrows, and privations.

* * *

Almsgiving is a seed. If you want it to produce good fruit a hundredfold, make this seed good by giving alms with simplicity, from a good, merciful, compassionate heart. Be assured that you will not lose much, or rather that you will lose nothing. Instead, you will obtain infinitely more by bestowing this perishable charity, if only you give it from a good heart, with faith in the Giver of rewards, and not from self-serving or self-loving motives. "*Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me*" (Matt 25:40), your Lord.

The thoughts of a man have the most powerful influence on the state and inclinations of his heart and actions. Therefore, for heart to be pure, good, calm, for the inclinations of the will to be good and pious, it is necessary to

cleanse our thoughts through prayer, by reading the Holy Scriptures and the writings of the Holy Fathers, as well as meditating on the perishability, evanescence, and disappearance of earthly delights.

* * *

You desire a spiritual blessing, either for yourself, someone else, or for everyone, but the Lord has desired the same long, long before you, and He is ready to grant this blessing to you and to others. Mere readiness to accept the Divine gift is required; mere worthiness in those who are to receive it is required, for God is infinite mercy, infinite goodness, and is always ready to grant every blessing, and often bestows it even before we ask, and in every case He "*is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think*" (Eph 3:20). Therefore, it is always with hope and boldness that I ask spiritual and even material blessings of the Lord (when these latter are necessary), and the Lord grants them according to His faithful promise: "*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened*" (Matt 7:7, 8).

After the general resurrection, our bodies will be spiritual, not earthly, and everything earthly will remain on earth. Remembering what our future abode will be, Christians, let us, then, gradually detach ourselves from everything earthly. In the resurrection of the dead, men shall be "*like angels of God in heaven*" (Matt 22:30), as spiritual as they! Therefore, there will be neither meat, nor drink, nor clothing, nor air, nor warmth (all of which nourish, warm and support our bodies here), "*but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Rom 14:17). Now, our earthly bodies are sustained by the earth, that is, by earthly elements, but then all "*the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up*" (2 Pet 3:10). Remembering these future changes in our destiny, in our bodies, and in our lives, "*and [in] the wonder of seeing God incarnate, let us shun the vain world, and set our minds upon Divine things: Christ came upon earth, in order to raise us up to heaven.*"[40] The spiritual body is entirely different from the material, elemental one. "*That God may be all in all*" (1 Cor 15:28).

Since the Lord has formed us of two elements—matter and spirit—a reasonable soul and a material body requiring material support, the devil, to

spite God and us, strives in every way to take advantage of this duality of our nature by inclining us to put our trust not in God, but in carnal things. He tempts our flesh to every sin—gluttony, fornication, covetousness, envy, slothfulness, theft, avarice, hatred, murder. He tries to make us trust not in God, but in money, food and drink, human ties and connections, ranks, honors and privileges, nobility of birth, intellect, education, books. He incites us to find pleasure in food, drink, dress, concerts of worldly music, theaters, jokes, idle talk, and wordplay. But the true servant of God trusts in his Lord, always and in everything, in the common Father and Provider of all, accomplishing everything in everyone. The true servant remembers the following words: "*Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you*" (1 Pet 5:7). As soon as disturbance and violence arise in your soul, recognize the presence of Satan, and immediately set against him the Rock, Christ. Satan will break his teeth against that Rock, and shall not reach you. But also bear in mind that you must love everyone as yourself.

Our Lady, the Mother of God, the angels, and all the saints are as near to me when I call upon them with a pure, undivided heart as my own soul. They hear me as I hear myself, for we are all one body, one spirit, one Church of angels and men. The members of the Church have the same relation to each other as members of one body: they serve, help, sustain, and save each other. (But is it thus with the Protestants?)

In what high, holy company does the Christian find himself in the Church, surrounded by icons of angels and saints! He is a member of that same Church to which the saints belong. What an incitement to moral change and aspiration toward the life that never ages, to which they too aspired, and which they actually attained!

* * *

The devil imprisons and conquers man in this world by excessively exciting his natural spiritual and bodily needs, such as the need for food and drink (and since everything has to be bought with money, he excites love of money as well), the need for clothing, the need for pleasures, the need for honors, fame, and a good name. All these and other similar requirements, which God has put into the very nature of man, are continually perverted by the devil, who carries them to extremes, sometimes quite needlessly (for instance, with eating and drinking), and thus ruins both soul and body and

separates the soul from God through its attachment to material things and through its falling into sensuality and into the passions of malice, pride, envy, despondency, slothfulness, gluttony, fornication, drunkenness, covetousness, ambition, etc. Therefore fasting, chastity, nonacquisitiveness, kindness, meekness, humility, faith, hope, love, prayer, and meditation are necessary.

* * *

Guard in every way your heart, or the sincerity of your heart, your capacity to sympathize with your neighbors' joys and sorrows. Avoid, as you would avoid mortal poison, any indifference and coldness to people's misfortunes, sicknesses, and needs, for by sympathy, especially active sympathy, the love and goodness of the Christian are revealed, and in love the whole law is contained. On the contrary, our selfishness, malice, malevolence, and envy are revealed by a lack of sympathy. Therefore, pray for all for whom the Church instructs us to pray, or, better yet, pray willingly for others as you pray for yourself. Do not become weak in sincerity, do not lose inner respect for the person or people for whom you pray, do not allow the holy fire of love to be extinguished, or your light darkened. Do not despair at the wiles of the enemy who undermines your heart, strives to replace love with aversion for all, tries to silence your prayer for others, knowing it is the best proof of evangelical love for our brothers.

Lord! Grant that Your church may impart enlightenment of souls, cleansing from sins, sanctification, peace, health, tranquility of soul to all who enter it with faith, piety, and fear of God. May it strengthen their faith, hope, and love; may it further the amendment of their lives; may it grant success in all their good beginnings and actions. May they aspire to mutual love, a pure Christian life. May it soften their hearts and end their self-love, hard-heartedness, covetousness, greed, envy, malice, gluttony, drunkenness, dissoluteness. May the Church destroy these vices, so harmful to social accord, undermining its very foundations. Grant this, grant this, O Lord, to all those who love to attend Your church, and inspire those who do not love it to come to love it and to amend their lives and works, for the time is near for the judgment of people in every social status and position, either sex and

every age. A work of infinite importance stands before all—to give an answer at the dread judgment of Christ.

* * *

How and when are we to care for the imperishable raiment of the soul—meekness, righteousness, chastity, patience, mercy—when all our care, attention, and means are directed to perishable clothing and the adornment of our body? We cannot serve two masters, for the soul is simple and indivisible. How and when are we to care for the spiritual riches of good works when we are only greedy for perishable riches and strive to amass it with all our might and means, when our heart clings to money, to the world, and not to God? How and when are we to care for incorruptible spiritual food and for blessed drink—prayer, the reading of God's word, the writings and lives of the Holy Fathers, the Communion of the Body and Blood of the Lord—when we hardly let food and drink out of our mouths, as well as this stupefying, smoldering, poisonous smoke which many consider so pleasant? How can our soul rejoice in the Holy Spirit when we are continually occupied by earthly, vain pastimes and pleasures? O, ruinous service to corruption, drawing us away from life incorruptible, true, and eternal!

* * *

When we pray, the holiest, highest subjects become strangely intermingled in our thoughts with earthly, worldly, trifling subjects. For instance, God becomes mixed up with some object we love, such as money, dress, a hat, a dainty dish, a sweet drink, or else some distinctions, such as a cross, an order, a ribbon, etc. How heedless, how overcome with passions, how distracted we are! This should be natural only to the pagans who do not know the true God and His Son Jesus Christ, together with the Holy Spirit. It should not happen to Christians, whose treasure is not on earth, but in heaven. Where, then, is the living water, springing forth in life-giving streams from hearts wholly devoted to God? It is not there, because it is thrust out of our hearts by worldly vanities and other passions. "*You cannot serve God and mammon*" (Matt 6:24), says the Truth.

There is an intimate relationship between the image and its Prototype—between a pious man and God, between the members and the Head,

between the flock and the Shepherd, between the Vine and the branches. If we always believed and remembered this truth, we would live in such love and purity! How compassionate would we be to one another, how indulgent, how forgiving, knowing that we ourselves, before all, are in need of both God's and man's indulgence and mercy, since we are most infirm in spirit and body.

* * *

Concerning grace. What is grace? It is the blessed power of God, given to a person who believes and is baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ or the Holy Trinity. It is a power that cleanses, sanctifies, enlightens, helps in doing good, removes from evil, comforts and gives courage in misfortunes, sorrows and sicknesses. It is a pledge of receiving everlasting blessings prepared by God in heaven for His chosen ones. Has a proud, selfish, malicious, envious person become meek, humble, and self-denying for the sake of the glory of God and the good of his neighbor? Has he become benevolent toward all, indulgent, yielding, without connivance? He has become so by the power of grace. Has an unbeliever become a believing, zealous follower of the precepts of the faith? He has become so by the power of grace. Has a money-loving, covetous, unjust man, hard-hearted to the poor, changed in the depths of his soul and become unmercenary, just, generous, compassionate? He owes it to the power of the grace of Christ. Has a glutton, a great eater and drinker, become abstinent, temperate, not through illness or any consciousness of the harmfulness of intemperance to the body, but from the realization of a moral, higher purpose? He has become so by the power of grace. Has anyone who was previously full of hatred, rancor, and revenge suddenly become benevolent and loving even to his enemies, ill-wishers, and revilers, forgetting all offenses? He has become so by the regenerating, changing, and renewing power of grace. Has anyone who was formerly cold toward God, toward the Church, the divine services, prayer, and in general the sacraments of religion that cleanse and strengthen our souls and bodies suddenly changed in his soul and become ardent toward God, the divine services, prayers, and reverent toward the sacraments? He has become so by the action of the saving grace of God. From this, it is evident that many live without grace, not recognizing its importance and indispensability. Few seek it, even though

the Word of the Lord says: "*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*" (Matt 6:33). Many live in plenty and ease, enjoy blooming health, eat with pleasure, drink, walk, amuse themselves, write or work in the various branches of human activity, but they do not have the grace of God in their hearts, that priceless treasure of the Christian, without which no one can be a true Christian and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

Among Christians, both the sciences and literature have now become almost completely secular. The Gospel and religion are neglected, the lives of the saints are scoffed at, in general there is everywhere a kind of feverish, worldly activity, but no one thinks of pleasing God and saving his soul. What a pitiable condition!

* * *

We are guilty of idolatry, even in Christianity. We make idols of self-love, ambition, worldly pleasures, gluttony, love of gain, adultery. This has completely turned away our eyes and hearts from God and the heavenly country, nailing us to the earth. This has uprooted brotherly love, setting us against one another. How terrible it will be for us!

* * *

How must we apprehend the highest mystery of Divine love for us—the mystery of the Christian faith? With our mind, heart, and life, with our free will. Are all three powers of our soul penetrated by holy faith, as were the souls of the saints? The kingdom of heaven "*is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal [the three powers of the soul] till it was all leavened*" (Luke 13:21). We apprehend worldly, transitory, sinful things (sensuality, covetousness, and ambition) with all the powers of our souls and bodies, but not heavenly and eternal things.

The Lord God has, so to speak, shared His eternal life with us. We are all deified by His Most-pure Body and Blood; we are united to Divinity. "*I said Ye are gods, and ye are all children of the most High*" (Psalm 81:6) (Our Father, Who art in heaven). Should we not also, according to His will, share that which sustains our souls and bodies—our mind, our knowledge, our material wealth—with our neighbors, for did He not Himself promise us, not a diminution, but an increase of the talents entrusted to us and returned by us? "*With what measure you use, it will be measured back to*

you” (Matt 7:2). If God has received us into communion with Divinity, in the communion of His Body and Blood, then we, likewise, should have all things in common, without, however, encouraging idleness and slothfulness. In other words, the rich should help the poor, giving as many alms as possible; they should receive strangers, visit the sick, comfort the sorrowful, instruct the ignorant, teach the erring, forgive offenses, remembering that we are all Christ’s. And Christ shall recompense us for everything we do. “*For I was hungry, and you gave Me food*” (Matt 25:35). And so on.

The Cross and the sign of the Cross are the power of God. This is why the Lord is always present in them. Similarly, the icons of the Lord, the Mother of God, the holy angels and saints may also possess the power of God for believers, accomplishing miracles through them. Why does this happen? Because, by the grace of God, the Lord, the Holy Virgin, the angels, the saints are present in them. In other words, they are always as near, and even nearer, than these icons are to us. Truly, this is so. Experience often confirms this.

* * *

What effect does the theater have on the heart? The spirit of this world, the spirit of idleness, idle talk, jest, cunning, wickedness, pride, presumption—they do not bring any moral good to anyone. The authors of the dramas and the actors only give people what they have in themselves, their own spirit, neither more nor less. And do the actors think of public morality? Have they any intention to correcting people’s morals? None whatsoever.

* * *

Always consider it a great joy to speak in prayer to the Lord, our most-pure Lady the Mother of God, or the angels and saints. Always pray to them with trembling reverence, remembering with Whom you are conversing, you who are an impure, insignificant worm.

* * *

Why does sincere prayer for others have such great power? Because by cleaving to God during prayer, I become one spirit with Him and unite with myself, through faith and love, those for whom I pray. The Holy Spirit acting in me also acts at the same time in them, for He accomplishes all things. "*We, though many, are one bread and one body*" (1 Cor 10:17). "*There is one Body and one Spirit*" (Eph 4:4).

The spiritual tranquility and blessedness we sometimes experience in God's church during harmonious singing by the choir and clear reading by the reader or the officiating clergy is a foretaste of that infinite blessedness that those who will eternally contemplate the unutterable beauty of God's countenance will experience. We must be zealous about good singing and clear reading. When we utter the names of God's saints in prayer, we move them to pray for us.

* * *

When entering the Church of God to pray, we should know and remember that we are the children of the Heavenly Father, and we have come into His house. Therefore, we must stand there with filial feelings of sincere love and gratitude in fervent prayer. Our spirit should cry "*Abba, Father!*" (Rom 8:15).

How good You are, My Lord, and how near You are to us, so near that we can always speak to You, be comforted by You, breathe through You, be enlightened by You, find peace in You, obtain spiritual freedom in You, O Lord! Teach me simplicity of love for You and my neighbor, so that I will be with You always, so that I will have peace in You always. Lord! Grant that I may not for a single moment have fellowship with the abominable, evil enemy, the devil, not through malice, or pride, or envy, or avarice, or love of money, or gluttony, or impure thoughts, or blasphemy, or despondency, or falsehood, or by anything sinful. Grant that I may ever be wholly Yours!

* * *

My infinite sweetness, O Lord Jesus Christ, what sweetness have You not allowed me to taste during my temporal existence! I thank You, my Mercy, my sweetness. But if earthly blessings are so numerous, so various, so sweet, then how wonderful must heavenly, spiritual blessings be! They are

truly infinite, numberless, unimaginably sweet. Do not deprive me, then, O most merciful and most gracious Lord, of Your heavenly sweetness, which You have prepared for those who love You. Do not deprive others of them either! Grant that they may all know You, Lord, our Sweetness! For You, our Blessedness, are everywhere on earth, for every sweetness is Your work! Also grant, O Lord, that I may submissively bear the sorrows of this life. They are necessary for my passionate flesh, for my old man. Lover of mankind! Teach the rest of Your people also to bear them submissively, and grant that they may learn how necessary it is to be "*patient in tribulation*" (Rom 12:12). "*In the world you will have tribulation*" (John 16:33).

When you ask for life, faith, and spiritual understanding for others, do you ask sincerely, or do you ask hypocritically, with your tongue alone? Do you desire their increase in these blessings with all your soul? Are you yourself progressing in them? Or are you still in bondage to the passions? Beware, the Master sees everything with His clearest eyes. It is necessary to pray to Him with understanding, in simplicity of heart, with a fervent spirit.

* * *

When you feel unwell and indisposed because of some sickness, and when in this condition your prayer becomes cold, heavy, filled with despondency and even despair, do not be disheartened, for the Lord knows your sick and painful condition. Struggle against your infirmity, pray as much as you have strength, and the Lord will not despise the infirmity of your flesh and spirit.

* * *

When you feel yourself to be an impious, impure, wicked, blasphemous sinner, and for this reason do not feel worthy to draw near to Our Lady and pray to Her, this is the very time to pray fervently to Her, precisely because you feel yourself such a sinner. Do not lie in the mire of sin, but come to Our Lady, stand before Her image in the hope that She Herself is there present, show Her your sinful sores without shame, show Her how you loath them. Ask Her to cleanse you from this spiritual leprosy, and you shall not be ashamed. The all-merciful One will not despise you; the most-pure and the most-speedy Protectress will cleanse you, as the Lord Himself cleansed the ten lepers.

* * *

Where shall I find a Christian who can teach others to despise the flesh with his actions, since it will pass away so soon, and to care instead for the immortal soul? Where shall I find a man of such elevated spirit? It is hard to find such a person on this earth, though certainly there are a few, but in the "church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven," (Heb 12.23) in the heavenly Church, there are as many such men as there are stars in heaven. By renouncing themselves, their old corrupt, lost man, the broken vessel that cannot contain any water, they took up their crosses and followed Christ, they gave up their whole lives to Him, despising the flesh and the world as transitory. They heard the voice saying, "*What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and lose his own soul?*" (Matt 16:26), and they knew that the flesh and the world shall pass away and shall be no more. Furthermore, they knew that our soul is priceless, because, being the image of God, it is immortal. Therefore, the whole world is worth nothing compared to the soul, for "*Heaven and earth will pass away*" (Mark 13:31), according to the Word of the Saviour. Besides, at every step, with our own

eyes, we become convinced of the evanescence of the world—everything in the world moves and revolves, and all the elements are in motion, the seasons of the year change. People are born, people die, some marry, others lose their wives, some build themselves houses, others are deprived of their dwellings and property. Some towns grow and are decorated, while others are destroyed by fire and reduced to ashes. Everything on earth passes away, and this shows that the earth itself shall some day also pass away. If everything in the house takes fire, then the house itself will be burnt. "*The heavens and the earth are … reserved for fire.*" Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against "*the Day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men*" (2 Pet 3:7). Where, then, shall I find true Christians, who despise everything earthly as transitory, and strive with all their might to please God their eternal Father, and to save their souls? Where shall I find a man of such exalted spirit that, like a king or a god, he would despise everything earthly for God's sake, and would bravely subdue all worldly passions and attachments to his reason or to the law of God? Who will be zealous with God-like zeal for the salvation of his brethren, and who will care for their enlightenment, cleansing, and strengthening in faith and virtue? Lord! Raise such candles for the illumination of this world and Your Church, that they may preach Your glory, that they may be zealous for Your glory and of the salvation of Your people! Lord, all things are possible to You! Lord, how long shall the vanity of this world continue? How long shall we turn away from You, our Creator and Saviour? Lord, let all things concerning us be ordered according to Your will!

When a malicious, proud, evil spirit disturbs you before or during the reading of the prayers to the Lord God, or to the Mother of God, then vividly call to mind that all those present in the Church are the children of the heavenly, almighty, unoriginate, infinite, most merciful Father, and that the Lord is their Father. Then, pray to Him boldly, peacefully, joyfully, freely, before the face of all men, fearing neither mockery, nor contempt, nor the malice of the children of this world. Do not be cunning or ashamed before others. Do not doubt, but pray sincerely to the Heavenly Father; especially the Lord's Prayer, reverently, peacefully, without rushing. In general, read all the prayers quietly, evenly, with reverence, remembering that you are speaking to God.

* * *

How many Christians say, “I believe in God,” without truly believing! How many mouths are dumb when it is necessary to defend the glory of God and of His saints in front of a society that blasphemes them! Others remain silent when it is necessary to continue a conversation about God, or to put a stop to any disrespect or insolence. Many say, “I believe in God,” but should any misfortune or temptation arise, they grow fainthearted and despondent. Sometimes they begin to blame God. And what becomes of all their faith? This should be the exact time to show obedience to the will of God, and to say, “Let it be as the Lord wills.” “*Blessed be the name of the Lord*” (Job 1:21). Otherwise it is obvious that they only believe in God in times of happiness, but renounce Him in times of misfortune.

Bear the pain and heaviness of an operation patiently, and you will regain your health (I am speaking about confession). It means that at confession you must declare all your shameful deeds to your confessor without concealing anything, even if this is painful, shameful, ignominious, and humiliating. Otherwise, the wound will remain unhealed, it will ache and continue to be painful, it will undermine your spiritual health, and it will become like a yeast for the growth of other spiritual infirmities, sinful habits, and passions. A priest is a spiritual physician. Show him your wounds without being ashamed, sincerely, openly, with filial trust and confidence, for the confessor is your spiritual father, who should love you more than your own father and mother, After all, Christ’s love is higher than any natural love. He must give an answer to God for you. Why has our life become so impure, so full of passions and sinful habits? Because a great many conceal their spiritual wounds and sores, because of which they worsen and become inflamed, until it becomes impossible to apply any remedy to them.

* * *

Let heaven and earth, created by the Lord, existing, acting, and moving through Him, teach me who am one spirit with the Lord! What reason do I have to grieve when I am, and can always be, one spirit with the Lord? I will put all my trust in Him. Heaven and earth have existed for thousands of years through the Lord, His power and laws, though they are soulless, inert,

inactive, and powerless matter. The grass, the flowers of the field, the birds, fish, as well. How all this should teach us to trust completely in God's providence!

* * *

Do not despise any man, however poor he may be, but behave with full respect and kindness to every well-intentioned man, especially to the poor, as to our members worthy of compassion—or, rather, the members of Christ—otherwise, you will cruelly wound your own soul. O, how easy it seems to live in simplicity and love, and yet how difficult it is for our corrupt hearts to live in love! At every step, there is a new pretext for enmity against our brother.

* * *

Lord! I am Your vessel: fill me with the gifts of Your Holy Spirit. Without You, I am void of every blessing. Rather, I am full of every sin. Lord! I am Your ship; fill me with the cargo of good works. Lord! I am Your ark; fill me, not with the delusion of love of money and pleasures, but with love for You and Your living image, man.

* * *

Man! To what place has your nature been raised in the person of Jesus Christ, the God-man? The throne of the Godhead. To what height has your nature been raised in the person of the Theotokos? Higher than the cherubim and seraphim. For whom was this done? For you, so that you, being freed from the corruption of the lusts of the flesh, might become a partaker of the Divine nature. And how do you answer these intentions and actions of God, this most merciful providence of your Lord? All the Divine powers for life and piety have been given you, and how do you avail yourself of them? Are you not careless of them? Do you not cling wholly to the earth, like a snail?

* * *

Our soul is simple, since it is the image and likeness of God; therefore, when it is well looked after, living according to the will of God, then it is peaceful, easy, and joyous. On the other hand, when it consents to sin, commits sin, or is forced into sin by the enemy, then it becomes disturbed, darkened, and heavy. Thus, always do the will of God, and you will be simple and full of peace, but if you sin, you will have no peace. Do not yield to the enemy; he brings anguish, constraint, darkness, and fire into the soul. "*Put away the evil of your doings*" (Isa 1:16).

As natural, sweet, and easy it is to breathe the air, it should be equally natural, sweet, and easy to breathe by the Holy Spirit, the breath of our soul. As natural, easy, and pleasant it is to love ourselves, it should be equally natural, easy, and pleasant to love all mankind, for we are all one creation of the one God, images and likenesses of the same God. We have the one breath, one soul, one form.

* * *

All sorrows, sicknesses, torments, deprivations, are allowed by God in order to drive out the delusion of sin, and to implant true virtue in the heart, that we may learn by experience the falsehood, insolence, tyranny, and lethalness of sin. Through them, we are inspired with loathing for sin, and we learn by experience the truth of meekness, wisdom, the need to rule the hearts of men with gentleness, and the life-giving properties of virtue. Therefore, I will bear all afflictions courageously, with gratitude to the Lord, the Physician of our souls, our most-loving Saviour.

* * *

The Lord is everywhere and fills all things. The Lord carries and keeps everything; therefore, He is called Almighty. I should be free of sorrow. We are called into being out of nonexistence by the omnipotence of God, and since we are nothing of ourselves, we cannot do anything by our own strength; without God we cannot even sustain our own lives, because God is everything to us—our life, strength, light, air, spiritual meat and drink, raiment, our all. He has created and provides for all our physical needs: He gives light, air, warmth, food, drink, clothing, and dwelling. Blessed are the poor in spirit, who always acknowledge their own nothingness and the omnipotence of God. Blessed are those who are free of sorrows in this life;

blessed are the simple-hearted. Blessed are those who commit themselves in all things into the hands of God. "*Let us commit ourselves, and one another, and all our life unto Christ our God.*"[41] Only be with God at all times, and everything will be given unto you, everything will be added unto you. "*Seek first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness [in yourself and in others], and all these things shall be added to you*" (Matt 6:33). Only let God be in your hearts, be inseparably united to Him at all times, and all earthly things will be given to you. Only do not set your heart on anything worldly, for the God of your heart is your only joy. God is inexhaustible riches, an ever-flowing source; where God is, there is every blessing. Those who love God are followed by all blessings, as the shadow follows the body.

How can I be cold to my neighbor when the Lord commanded me to love him as myself, or as He Himself has loved us? But we often become cold to our neighbor because we attach ourselves to earthly delights and love only ourselves. Therefore, let us renounce earthly delights, self-love, and intemperance, so that we may please our Lord.

* * *

Were it not for the Lord and Our Lady, were it not for my guardian angel and the saints, the devil and his minions would have stopped the mouths of us all, not allowing us to praise the Name of the Lord. It would certainly have been so, for even now they try to do this. Sometimes, to a certain extent, they succeed. Who is it that hinders priests during their service? The devil.

* * *

We must never forget that we are all one body, and we should encourage one other to love and good works. We pastors must especially remember and do this. Yes, we should remember that if our own souls are serene, if we stand firm in faith and piety ourselves, then our flock, too, will be firmer, more serene, and purer in life. If the head is bright and clear, the members are also bright and clear, but if our souls are darkened by manifold passions, the darker, too, will become the body of the Church, our flock, because there is a close connection between the head and its members, the pastor and his flock. This is why the Lord said, "*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven*"

(Matt 5:16). "*If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!*" (Matt 6:23). And, therefore, do not think that your flock do not feel the effects of your gluttony, your love of money: they do indeed! First of all, they feel it through your negligence of their souls, for what care can he who cares about money have for souls? None. Yes, if the light darkens in the pastor himself, it darkens also in his flock, through his close spiritual connection with it, like the head with the members. If you stand firm in spiritual virtues, they are also firm. If you are fervent in prayer and pray fervently for them, they feel this as well. If you are spiritually strengthen yourself, they too become stronger. If you grow weak, they too become weak. Lord, have mercy upon me!

Our body consists of earthly elements—light, heat, air, water, and earth, and it will dissolve into these same elements after death. Light and heat will return to light and heat, air to air, water to water, earth to earth. We are formed and then we dissipate. Glory to Your creative power, Lord! Let us know and remember our earthliness, the shortness of our time, and let us revere the Creator. We are all the work of His hands, "*the sheep of His pasture*" (Psalm 99:3).

Our life is an uninterrupted stream of God's unutterable mercies; therefore, we must continually thank and praise God the Creator and Benefactor. Our love for God and our neighbor, God's image and our fellow-member, should be especially constant. By loving our neighbor, we love God; by respecting every man, we respect the image of God, God Himself, and our own selves, for our brother is another fifth, tenth, hundredth, thousandth, millionth version of ourselves. There are many leaves on a tree, but all are one tree. They live the same life, they have the same source, the same appearance, the same beginning, and the same end.

* * *

If you are not sure if an icon of the Theotokos has been blessed or not, know that Our Lady, the Prototype of this image, was herself already sanctified nineteen hundred years ago, in the womb of Her mother, Anna, at Her birth, in the temple of Jerusalem, and finally by the indescribable Incarnation of God the Word. She is ever holy and eternally, immovably, unchangeably Most Holy. She is in every place, present in every icon of Hers. The material object is sanctified by the mere tracing of Her face and

name alone. The same is true of icons of the Saviour. Therefore, contemplate every icon in simplicity of heart, for any doubt proceeds from the devil in order to divert you from heartfelt prayer. Say to him that the whole earth is holy; the power of my Lord, and of His most-pure Mother—the Queen of the whole world—is in every place; I gaze at Her, the most-pure One, with the eyes of my heart, and I do not worship a board. The image is drawn only to help my weak faith.

* * *

The wonder-working icons of the Mother of God and other saints teach us to look at every icon as though it were the saint himself or herself. They teach us to pray to them as to living people conversing with us, for they are as near, and still nearer to us, than the icons, if only we prayed to them with faith and sincerity. It is the same with the life-giving Cross. Where the cross is, or the sign of the cross, there is Christ Himself, His power and His salvation. Only make the sign of the cross or worship the cross with faith.

* * *

When you pray to God by means using familiar prayers, to which you have grown accustomed, say in your heart: Lord! You are ever the same. My heart changes and grows cold to the words of the prayer, but yet their power remains the same. You, too, are eternally the same.

* * *

When you pray to God, you converse with Him face to face; therefore, converse with Him as with a king, face to face. Likewise, converse with the heavenly Queen and the angels and saints as though face to face, and do not, on any account, at that time, allow your heart to be occupied by, and attached to, anything irrelevant. Would you, when speaking with a king or queen, be occupied at that time with anything irrelevant or unimportant? Would you, for instance, look out of the window and watch the passers-by, or would you look at the objects in the room, and so on? Would not this be the greatest offense to the royal majesty? How dare we, then, act in this way, and even much worse than this, when we converse with the Lord?

* * *

Sorrows are a great teacher; sorrows show us our weaknesses, passions, and the need for repentance; sorrows cleanse the soul, sobering it as from drunkenness. They call down grace to the soul, they soften the heart, they inspire us with loathing for sin, and they strengthen us in faith, hope, and virtue.

* * *

The material objects to which we attach ourselves in our hearts, which we passionately desire or begrudge others, kill the soul by withdrawing it from God, the Source of life. The heart should be always in God, the inexhaustible Source of spiritual and material life, for who is the author of the existence of all creatures, all organic, vegetable and animal life? Who is the source of the existence, order, and life of all worlds, both great and small? The Lord God. We must consider everything material as rubbish, unimportant, nothingness, transitory, destructible, corruptible, and evanescent. We must pay attention to the invisible, simple, immortal soul that cannot be destroyed: "*To despise the flesh, for it passeth away, and to take care for the soul, the thing immortal.*"[42] Prove this with your deeds: fast, gladly give alms to the poor, entertain guests with joy. Do not begrudge anything to those who belong to your household, zealously read the Word of God, pray, repent, lament your sins, strive with all your might after holiness, meekness, humility, patience, and obedience.

How do we sustain our connection with the spiritual world, with the members of the heavenly Church? By calling on them in prayer; by keeping the feasts in their honor; and by attending Church services. For the Church is one, under one Head—Christ. How do we sustain our connection with the departed? By praying for them, especially when our prayers are united with the offering of the bloodless sacrifice. How do we maintain union with living Christians and with all people? Again, by praying for them all in God's church and even at home. Thus, we sustain our connection with those in heaven, on earth, and in hades. Great is the Christian faith!

* * *

In this world we encounter on one hand an infinity of material things, animate and inanimate creatures, and on the other hand, an infinite world of thoughts and feelings, or of foolishness and sinful lack of feeling, or of outright sinful and passionate thoughts and feelings. But all that is material is nothing, while a single grace-filled thought in a man, a single feeling of holy love, is infinitely more precious than the whole material creation.

* * *

As soon as you have told the Lord your sins with a contrite heart, they melt away. As soon as you have sighed and sorrowed for your sins, they are no more. "*Tell your lawless first, that you may be made righteous*" (Isa 43:26). As they came, so they disappear. They are a delusion. As soon as you have recognized that they are a delusion, an absurdity, madness; as soon as you have formed the resolution to act virtuously in the future, God cleanses you of them through His priest and the Holy Mysteries.

* * *

Christ, the Life-giver, the All-perfect God, the Creator, the Provider, Guardian, and Saviour, is more than enough for a full, complete life. No material things are necessary for my immaterial heart; they are only necessary for the perishable and transitory body, but thanks to the grace and generosity of God, the body has everything it needs. The lusts and whims of the flesh, the old man, are countless, but they are delusion, vanity, phantoms, nothing. They are darkness, perversion, destruction for the soul. My peace and my life are in God alone.

* * *

What a close connection there is between the heavenly and the earthly Church! What love the Church has! She unceasingly remembers and glorifies the heavenly Church for the great deeds accomplished on earth for God's sake. She unceasingly prays for the Church on earth and intercedes for the departed, in the hope of their resurrection, eternal life, and union with God and the saints. Her love is immense, grand, divine! Let us enter into the spirit of this love of our Mother, the Orthodox Church, and let us be penetrated with the spirit of this love. Let us consider all our brothers as our

own members, let us consider them and ourselves as members of the one body of the Church, and let us love them actively as ourselves. Then, we ourselves shall be living members of the heavenly Church, and she will be our active and speedy helper and intercessor for our souls.

* * *

As long as we lead a carnal life and do not draw near to God with our hearts, the demons will hide themselves within us, concealing themselves in the forms of various passions, such as greed for food and drink, adulterous passion, pride, arrogant freethinking concerning the faith, the Church, and the dogmas, malice, envy, avarice, covetousness. We live by their will. However, as soon as we begin to truly serve the Lord, provoking the demons and striking at the very heart of the passions nesting in us, they take up arms against us with all their hellish malice, with all their fiery terrors and manifold violent, burning attachments to earthly things, until we drive them out of us by fervent prayer or by the Communion of the Holy Mysteries. Thus, it sometimes happens that those who are possessed with evil spirits remain tranquil until they are brought near something holy, but as soon as they approach it they are overtaken by an extraordinary power, by a repulsion for the holy object, by blasphemy. They spit at the holy object and scream. This explains why the possessed scream in church during divine services or when they approach the relics of saints. It is because the demons are met by the good power, which is hateful to them and stronger than they, which burns, oppresses, strikes them righteously, and drives them out of their beloved dwellings.

* * *

Every Christian house in itself represents the infinitely large house of the universe, heaven and earth, in which the Lord dwells. It is for this reason that one sees in every Christian house representations of the Saviour and of the Mother of God, who hearken to the prayers of those living in the house.

* * *

O Man! Recognize your spiritual misfortune, and steadfastly, continually pray to the Saviour of men to save you from it. Do not say to yourself, “I

am not in danger; I am not in misery; I do not need to pray much and often to be saved from a misfortune which I do not even understand and know." This is the very misfortune, that you, being in the greatest misery, do not know your misfortune. This misfortune is your sinfulness.

* * *

If you must bear great misfortunes, sorrows, and sicknesses, do not grow faint-hearted or despondent. Do not blame God; do not desire death for yourself; and do not speak brazen things to the all-seeing God, such as: "What a cruel affliction!" or "What an unbearable misfortune; I would rather die!" or "I would rather kill myself!" God save you from such faint-heartedness, complaining, and impudence! Instead, endure all this courageously, since it is sent to you from God for your sins. Repeat, together with the wise thief, "*We receive the due reward of our deeds*" (Luke 23:41), and contemplate, with the eyes of your heart, the Saviour suffering on the cross.

Beware lest the floods of inner sorrows and afflictions draw you away from the Lord Jesus Christ, for the enemy will do everything possible to turn us aside from the Lord. He uses the delusion of pleasures, the heaviness of misfortunes, like Job, and especially inward distress and sorrows. Endure everything, thanking God, for "*all things work together for good to those who love God*" (Rom 8:28). Remember that you yourself daily confess in prayer to God that, because your sins, through which you continually anger the Lord and His most-pure Mother and all the heavenly Powers and your holy guardian angel, you are not worthy of His love and compassion, but deserve every condemnation and punishment. Thus, the Lord reveals His righteousness and His love by visiting you with sorrows, distress, humiliation, and shame, in order to cleanse your heart, to soften and refine it, to humble it and make it His worthy temple. "*For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives. Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it*" (Heb 12:6, 11).

The sin to which you do not consent is not imputed to you. These include, for instance, involuntary distraction during prayer, impure and blasphemous thoughts, involuntary anger, against which we zealously

struggle, avarice that we resist—all these are the attacks of the evil spirits. Our duty is to endure, to pray, to humble ourselves, and to love.

* * *

O, sweetest, holiest name, almighty name of our Lord Jesus Christ! O Lord, my victory, glory to You! Lord, we are Your members, we are one body with You, You are our Head! Lord, grant that all passions, all demons may flee from us! Lord, bestow upon us the grace of never failing love! Lord, grant that we may show respect and love to each other, as to You, as is proper for those deified by You.

* * *

What blessings will Your chosen ones enjoy in heaven with You, O Lord! How torturous for the heart are all earthly delights! How destructive to the heart is even a momentary attachment to anything earthly! And what peace, what freedom, what breadth, what light, what joy is to be found in You!

* * *

Glory to the never-failing power of Your cross, O Lord! When the enemy oppresses me with sinful thoughts and feelings, and I, having no freedom in my heart, make the sign of the cross several times with faith, then my sin suddenly passes away from me, the constraint vanishes, and I become free. Glory to You, Lord! Lord, let nothing, nothing carnal, material turn me away from You! Let me always be with You! How good it is to be with You!

* * *

O Lord! Deprive me not of Your heavenly good things, for You are the Lord and can do so if You will. O Lord, save me from eternal torments, for You are the Lord and can also easily do so if You will. O Lord, whether I have sinned in mind, thought, word or deed, forgive me, seeing the infirmity of my soul. O Lord, You can do all things for me who repents and asks Your blessings. And You, O Queen of all angels and men, all-merciful, capable of all miraculous help, the terrible Sovereign, the disperser and

flame of all evil powers, who can so easily destroy, with the speed of lightning, all the manifold snares of the evil spirits, save us from every sin and strengthen us by Your power in every virtue. Make us conformable to Your Son and our God, and to Thyself, most-holy Virgin Theotokos, for we bear the name of Christ, Your Son, as the members of His body. May the name "Christian" not become an empty sound, void of power, but may we all be imitators of Christ, the "*Author … of our faith*" (Heb 12:2), and of You, the "*First Origin of spiritual renovation.*"[43] May we all be as "*living stones, … built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God*" (1 Pet 2:5). O Sovereign Lady! May we not call You by that name in vain: manifest in us, now and for ever, Your holy, living, active majesty. Do this, for You are the all-merciful Mother of the All-merciful King. You can do all that is good. Drive away the darkness from our hearts, repel the arrows of the evil spirits, cunningly directed against us. Let Your peace and the peace of Your Son reign in our hearts, so that all may joyfully exclaim: Who, after the Lord, is like unto Our Lady, our all-merciful, speedy intercessor, who can do all that is good for us? Therefore, You are highly exalted, Our Lady; therefore, an unutterable abundance of grace is given to You, unutterable boldness and power before the throne of God, and the gift of almighty prayer. Therefore, You are adorned with ineffable holiness and purity; therefore, the Lord has given You unprecedented power, so that You would guard, defend, intercede, cleanse, and save us, the inheritance of Your Son and God. Save us, then, O most-pure, most-merciful, most-wise and most-helpful One! You are the Mother of our Saviour, Who of all names chose to be called "Saviour," for the very name of Jesus means "Saviour." To us, journeying through this life, it is natural to fall, for we are clothed with flesh, with its manifold passions. We are surrounded by the evil spirits who tempt us to sin, and we live in an adulterous and sinful world that also tempts us to sin. But You are above every sin, You are the brightest sun, You art most-pure, most-merciful, and quick to help. It is natural for You to wash us, defiled by sins, as a mother washes her children, if we call upon You humbly for help. It is natural for You to raise us, who continually fall, to intercede for us, to guard and save us who are subjected to the attacks of the evil spirits, and to direct us to the path to salvation.

"*I am the vine,*" says the Lord, "*you are the branches*" (John 15:5), that is the one Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Therefore, since the Lord is

holy, the Church is also holy. Since the Lord "*is the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6), the Church is the same, because the Church is united with the Lord, "*His body, of His flesh, and of His bones*" (Eph 5:30), or His "branches," rooted in Him, the living vine, and nourished by Him and growing in Him. Never imagine the Church apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father, and the Holy Spirit.

When the enemy strikes your heart with doubt in any word of the Saviour and wounds you, say to yourself: "Every word of my God Jesus Christ is life to me," and the poison of doubt will be cast out from your heart, and your soul will be tranquil and at ease. When you are troubled by doubt in any word or sentence, action, or rite of the Church, attack the enemy with the Saviour's words concerning the Church: "*When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you*" (that is the Church, implanted and spread by the Apostles, and especially the priests and teachers) "*into all truth*" (John 16:13; compare 14:16), and steadfastly believe that, according to the Saviour's promise, the Holy Spirit shall eternally dwell in her and guide "her into all truth." This signifies that everything in her is truthful and salvific; therefore, the Church is called "*the pillar and ground of the truth*" (1 Tim 3:15). Spiritual books, the words of the Holy Fathers and teachers of the Church, are inspired by the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of truth, love, and salvation.

Prayer is the constant sense of our own spiritual poverty and infirmity and constant contemplation of the works of God's great mercy, wisdom, and omnipotence in ourselves, in others, and in nature. Prayer is a continually grateful frame of mind.

* * *

Sometimes what we call prayer is not prayer at all. For example, a man goes to church, stands there for a time, looks at the icons or at other people, their faces and dress, and says that he prayed to God. Or else, he stands before an icon at home, bows his head, says some words he has learned by heart, without understanding and without feeling, and says that he prayed, although with his thoughts and heart he has not prayed at all, but was elsewhere, with other people and things, not with God.

* * *

"*Prayer is the lifting up of the mind and heart to God,*"[44] the contemplation of God, the bold conversation of the creature with the Creator, the soul reverently standing before Him, as before the King and the Life Itself, Who gives life to all. It is forgetfulness of everything that surrounds us. It is food for the soul, its air, its light, its life-giving warmth, its cleansing from sin. Prayer is the easy yoke of Christ, His light burden. Prayer is the constant feeling and recognition of our infirmity and spiritual poverty, the sanctification of our soul, a foretaste of future, angelic blessedness, heavenly rain that refreshes, waters, and fertilizes the soil of the soul. Prayer is the power and strength of the soul and body, the purifying and freshening of the air of the spirit, the enlightenment of the countenance, the joy of the spirit, the golden link uniting the creature to the Creator, courage and valor in all the sorrows and temptations of life, the lamp of life, success in all undertakings, angelic dignity, the strengthening of faith, hope, and love. Prayer is communion with the holy angels and saints who pleased God since the beginning of the world. Prayer is the amendment of life, the mother of heartfelt contrition and tears. Prayer is a powerful motive for works of mercy, safety in life, the destruction of the fear of death, disdain for earthly treasures, desire for heavenly blessings; the expectation of the universal Judge, the general resurrection, and the life of the age to come. Prayer is strenuous effort to save ourselves from eternal torments, unceasing striving for the mercy (forgiveness) of the Sovereign, walking before God, blissful disappearance before the all-creating and all-filling Creator, living water for the soul. Prayer is holding all people in our hearts through love, the descent of heaven into the soul, the abiding of the Most-holy Trinity in the soul, according to the Scriptures: "*We will come to him and make Our home with him*" (John 14:23).

God is as near to you as your own thoughts and faith. The more living and established is your thought about God, the more living your faith, the more vivid the recognition of your infirmity and nothingness and your need for God, the nearer will God be to you. God is as close to you as the air you breathe. For God is, so to speak, the spiritual air by Whom breathe all the angels, the souls of the saints and of living men, especially pious ones. You cannot live for a single moment without God, and you truly live each moment in Him, "*for in Him we live, and move and have our being*" (Acts 17:28).

Your doubt in the presence of God in all places and all times, and the resulting torment in your soul prove that we cannot be in any place without God, and in every moment, in every place, we live in Him alone. Therefore, our doubt only confirms the truth of God's omnipresence, and the impossibility for us, or any creature, to exist anywhere without Him. Indeed, no matter where you are, if you doubt in the presence of God and feel constraint and fire in your heart, do not succumb to doubt, consider it nothing but the delusion of the devil, and you will immediately receive consolation. We must always remember that God, like our soul, is a spiritual Being, and we either draw near Him with our thoughts and hearts, becoming one spirit with Him, or we withdraw from Him, becoming one spirit with the devil and his hosts.

* * *

Let every Christian understand the diabolical flattery that lies at the heart of everything worldly and perishable, that turns us away, using the most convincing justifications, from loving our neighbor as ourselves.

* * *

Icons are required by our nature. Can our nature do without images? Can we remember a person long absent without forming an image of him in our minds? Has not God Himself given us the capacity to imagine and create images? Icons are the Church's answer to an absolute need of our nature.

* * *

You who pray! Let the name of the Lord, or the Mother of God, or an angel, or a saint, be the same to you as the Lord Himself, the Mother of God Herself, of the angel or saint himself. Let the nearness of your word to your heart be the pledge and testimony of the nearness to your heart of the Lord Himself, of the most-pure Virgin, of the angel or saint. The name of the Lord is the Lord Himself: the Spirit is everywhere present, and filleth all things; the name of the Mother of God is the Mother of God Herself; the name of an angel is the angel; the name of a saint is the saint. How can this be? Do you not understand? Suppose, for instance, that your name is John Iliitch. If you are called by these names, then you would consider yourself

wholly to be as though present in them and would answer to them, meaning that you agree that your name is you, yourself, together with your soul and body. It is the same with the saints: when you speak their names, you call upon them directly. But, perhaps you would counter that they have no body. So what? The body is only the material covering of the soul, its house, while the man himself, the essence of the man, is his soul. When people call you by your name, it is not your body that replies, but your soul, using the body as an instrument. Thus, the name of God or the name of a saint are God Himself and the saint himself. But since God is a simple and omnipresent Spirit, and all the saints rest in God, therefore our communion with all the saints by the prayer of faith is a very easy matter. It is easier than speaking with the people who live with us, since we sometimes speak a different language than the person next to us, or we find it hard to express ourselves precisely, afraid we would be misunderstood. On the other hand, the saints hear even the simple, artless voice of a believing, loving heart. In heaven, even the language of the dumb is understood, and the soul—its conditions and desires—are seen even without words.

* * *

Icons in churches and houses are necessary, among other things, because they remind us of the immortality of the saints, "*for all live to Him*" (Luke 20:38), as the Lord said. The saints, in God, see, hear, and help us.

What is the name of our God? Love, Mercy, Compassion, Generosity. When you pray, contemplate with the eyes of your heart Love and Mercy standing before you. See the Lover of mankind hearkening to you.

* * *

When you pray to the heavenly Powers, do not imagine them as very terrible, inaccessible, or unmerciful. No, these beings are most meek, humble, God-fearing, loving, accessible, eager for our society, always ready to listen, and very near to those who call upon them in prayer with faith and love. Their attribute is love of communion with all Christians, through the prayer of faith. Also, when you pray to the heavenly Powers, despise everything earthly as perishable, and love the heavenly, spiritual life with your whole heart and aspire to it. It is most pleasing to them to see our sincere love of wisdom, our desire to become their fellow citizens, which

we are indeed called to be by the grace of Jesus Christ and the Most-divine Trinity.

* * *

Shall I forget You, Lord, the invisible, incomprehensible Lord, ever filling my heart with life, light, peace, joy, power, and endurance, You Who are every good in my life, and Who alone are my life! Do not let me forget You!

* * *

Lord! Your name is Love: do not cast me away, sinful as I am! Your name is Power: strengthen me, who so often grow weak and fall! Your name is Light: enlighten my soul, darkened by earthly passions! Your name is Peace: comfort my troubled soul! Your name is Mercy: do not cease to forgive me!

* * *

Sometimes, I pray in church for God's people with the following words: Lord, many of these who are standing in Your church are standing with idle souls, like empty vessels, and "know not what to pray for as they ought." Fill their hearts at this favorable time, in this day of salvation, with the grace of Your All-holy Spirit, and give them to me, to my prayer, to my love, already filled with the knowledge of Your goodness, heartfelt contrition, and devotion, as full vessels. Commit to them Your Holy Spirit, Who "*makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*" (Rom 8:26). I myself, their pastor, am sinful and impure above all men, but do not consider my sins, Lord, despise them according to You great mercy, and hear my prayer at this hour, for the sake of the grace of the priesthood dwelling in me. Grant, Lord, that this grace may not be idle in me, but that it may ever burn in me with faith, hope, love, and filial boldness in prayer for Your people!

Lord, accept my tearful prayer for my spiritual children and for all orthodox Christians who seek to please You. Accept it as my care for their salvation, as my pastoral duty! Be to them, according to my prayer, both the voice and the trumpet, awakening them from their sinful sleep, be the eye

watching over their hearts, the hand guiding them on their journey to the heavenly country and raising them up when they fall through doubt, faint-heartedness, and despondency. Be to them a mother's love—of which I myself am so deficient—tenderly caring for their true welfare. "*I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*" (1 Cor 9:22). For You are the only true pastor, invisibly and mysteriously pasturing the souls of men. You are the one true and most-wise teacher, speaking into the very hearts of Your people. You are the one true lover of Your creatures and children by grace; You are an abyss of wisdom and omnipotence; You alone are ever-vigilant and watchful, and You teach us Your ways, even during sleep. Be then Yourself, O Lord, instead of me, the pastor and teacher of Your sheep, which You have entrusted to me. Lead them Yourself to grassy pastures; guard them Yourself from spiritual and carnal wolves; guide their feet to the ways of truth, righteousness, and peace. Be their light, eyes, mouth, hands, and wisdom; but, above all, be to them the love in which I, a sinner, am so deficient!

God is an abyss of blessings, omniscience, great wisdom, omnipotence, grace, mercy, righteousness, and immutability in good. "*He who is joined to the Lord*," through the prayer of faith and the works of love, "*is one spirit*" (1 Cor 6:17) with the Lord, and therefore he is filled, according to the measure of his faith and love, with wisdom and spiritual power. He receives from Him, as from true Goodness, everything leading to salvation. He himself becomes merciful and compassionate to others; he is filled with spiritual wisdom, strength, and immutability in faith and virtue. Thus, since God is the ever-flowing Source, we have only to be united to Him by living faith and love unfeigned to receive the fullness of every spiritual blessing from Him. Such union is possible always, in every place, if only our hearts be always with Him, and not with the devil and the vanity of this world. This is why among righteous men we often find clairvoyant men and prophets working miracles of Divine omnipotence, love, and mercy. They are steadfast, unchangeable in virtue, even to the laying down of their lives for the faith because of their love for God, and they are filled with the spiritual wisdom of the saints, "*for the Lord our God is holy*" (Psalm 98:9).

If your heart and thoughts accord with the Ecumenical creed and God's commandments, you will unfailingly have close union and affinity with God, because God is a spiritual, reasonable, personal Being. However, if your heart and thoughts consciously differ in any respect with the Orthodox

faith and the commandments of God or the words of the Gospel, your union with God is broken, and your heart enters into a destructive alliance with the enemy of truth and life, the devil. In the same way that the air inside a closed-off room becomes stifling, full of all kinds of germs harmful to the health, and lacking in its vital quality, the soul, by withdrawing itself from God through any intentional doubt, unbelief, and iniquity, loses its vital quality and only lives a physical, lower form of life. In order to refresh and cleanse the air in the closed room, it is necessary to let in fresh air. The same is true of the soul (which is like air contained inside the temple of our body). It is necessary to introduce, through faith and love, the life-giving breath of the Divine Spirit. Then it will come back to life and will receive fresh strength for works of faith and love. "*Every soul is enlivened by the Holy Spirit,*"[45] sings the Holy Church, for what is man but a vessel filled with the breath of God (the soul), created in the image and likeness of God? It is therefore necessary to change the air contained in this vessel, the more so because the air is foul inside us from nature, because of the first fall into sin, and it becomes further corrupted by our passions and lusts, and it is often contaminated by the poisonous breath of the devil.

The air of a room is made of the same elements as the outer air, and comes from it directly. Since this relationship presupposes the existence of the outer air diffused everywhere, the very existence of our soul—the breath of God—presupposes the existence of the Spirit of God, Who is everywhere present and fillest all things. This is an analogy between physical rooms and the spiritual chamber of the soul.

Know, once for all, that in the Church, in all her services, sacraments, and prayers, the spirit of holiness, the spirit of peace, the spirit of life and salvation breathes. This is a quality of the Holy Spirit alone. Holy thoughts, or words of life and truth, can be easily distinguished from thoughts and words of falsehood and death. The latter are anguish, disturbance, spiritual death. "*For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*" (Rom 8:6).

Since God is a noetic Being, your heart can lose Him incredibly quickly, but it is equally easy to regain Him in the heart through steadfast repentance.

* * *

It is a wonderful thing! When the heart is united, through living faith, with the origin of life, the Holy Spirit, then it is calm, it expands, and all thought is free and bright. The tongue likewise is free and fluent, but as soon as someone mentally begrudges his brother anything material, such as food or money (when he remembers that a certain brother needs food), then his heart is immediately struck with spiritual paralysis. It becomes bound and constrained; the mind also becomes bound in consequence of the affliction of the heart—the source of thought—and is darkened. The same happens with the tongue; the circulation of the blood increases and flows to the head, and the whole man falls into an afflicted, abnormal state. Thus our neglect of our brother's spiritual condition is deservedly punished; thus our attachment to material things is deservedly punished! Glory to Your righteousness, O Lord!

* * *

The Almighty Power of God, existing and acting throughout the world, is concentrated in icons as the beams of the sun focus to a point when passed through a lens. The intensity of the power of God is especially concentrated in the reasonable image of the Divinity, man, particularly in the focal point of the heart filled with faith, hope, and love. The heart reflects the light of the Sun of righteousness, our Tri-hypostatic God, with the abundance of His gifts, given according to the measure of faith, warming and enlightening every soul.

* * *

Have you seen how the human face is reflected in a broken mirror as a multitude of separate images, depending on the number of broken pieces? Or perhaps you have seen a face reflected in a soap bubble, or in a drop of dew, or in the pupil of the human eye. If this is possible and is, in fact, a common phenomenon in nature, then why should not we Christians allow numerous representations of one and the same face, such as the Lord, or His most-pure Mother, or a saint? Why should we not see in each image the Lord Himself, or His most-pure Mother, or the saint, as we see numerous reflections of the same face in a mirror or in pictures? And why should we not reverence them with all the respect due to them? Does not nature itself in some cases teach us to imitate certain phenomena, if they help our piety?

* * *

During our prayer, God, the most-pure Theotokos, the angels, and the saints are assumed to be standing before us and listening to us, as is usually the case during the conversation of two or more people standing face to face. And so it is in actual fact. The Lord's face is always before us. Our Lady, the angels, and the saints, in the Lord God, always face us, if only our hearts are inclined to them. Our Lady and all the angels and saints are like one family living in the same house, with Our Lady as the Mother of all and the holy angels and saints as our elder and younger brothers. In the family of a good father, all the children are always with him, all love one another and care for one another. It is the same in the house of the Heavenly Father—the angels and all people are ever before His face, loving one another and caring for each other, the strong for the weak, the perfect for the imperfect.

* * *

If you pray to the Lord, or to Our Lady, or to the angels and saints with your whole heart, then you speak to the very heart of the Lord, of Our Lady, of the angel or saint, for we are all in the one heart of God, the Holy Spirit. All the saints are in the heart of God: "… *abides in Me, and I in Him*" (John 6:56).

When praying, firmly believe that the Lord is present in every word of your prayer, and that He is the fulfillment of all you ask, of every one of your petitions, both for yourself and for everyone else.

* * *

The enemy daily, violently battles my faith, hope, and love. You art persecuted, my faith, my hope, my love! Endure, faith; endure, hope; endure, love! Take courage, faith; take courage, hope; take courage, love! God is your defender! Do not grow weak, faith; do not grow weak, hope; do not grow weak, love!

* * *

You must have complete respect for living people, so that you may come to revere the face of God. For the face of the Lord Jesus Christ is a human

face. He who does not respect the human face will never respect the face of God!

* * *

Am I not everything to you? Am I not the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, your God, your life, your peace, your joy, and your blessedness? Am I not your riches, your meat, your drink, your clothing, your everything? To what, then, do you cling? To ashes and dust? What do you begrudge Me in the person of your neighbor? Dust and ashes? Do you begrudge ashes to Me, Who has created all things, Who can turn earth and stones into bread, Who can bring forth water from a rock? Be always with Me and in Me, and you shall be always filled with peace and joy. Has your trust in Me ever been in vain? Have I not always given you consolation and new life?

* * *

If you share your prosperity with your neighbor, if you have it in common with him, then all God's blessings will be shared with you. "*You will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. All Mine are yours, and yours are Mine*" (John 15:7; 17:10).

When you forbid the devil in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, then His name, sweetest to us, but most terrible and grievous to the demons, by itself creates powers like a double-edged sword. Equally, if you ask anything of the Heavenly Father or do anything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, then the Heavenly Father, for the sake of the name of His beloved Son, will give you all things in the Holy Spirit, if you fulfill His commandments. In the sacraments, He does not even consider your unworthiness, for wherever the name of God is invoked with faith, there it creates powers: for the very name of God is power.

* * *

Some people wonder what is the purpose of commemorating the names of the departed or living during prayer, since God, being omniscient, knows the names and the needs of every person. But those who think in this way forget, or do not know, the importance of prayer. They do not know the importance of every word spoken with the whole heart; they forget that the

justice and mercy of God are moved by our heartfelt prayer, which the Lord, in His goodness, imputes to the merit of the living or the departed themselves, since they are members of the one body of the Church. Neither do they know that the members of the "*Church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven*" (Heb 12:23) in their love for us, constantly pray to God for us, especially mentioning the names of those who prayed to them, giving as much as they receive. We remember their names, and they remember ours. But he who does not remember his brothers in prayer with love will not himself be remembered, and does not deserve to be remembered. Even a single word of faith and love means much in prayer. "*The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much*" (Jas 5:16).

When we pray for the living and the dead, commemorating them by name, we must pronounce these names with love, with the whole heart, as though we carried the people whom we commemorate in our souls, "*just as a nursing mother cherishes her children*" (1 Thess 2:7), remembering that they "*are members of one another; for we are members of His body*" (Eph 4:25; 5:30). It is not right to stand before God and merely run over their names with the tongue, without the heart's participation and love. We must remember that God sees into the heart; the people for whom we pray also require from us brotherly love and sympathy as our Christian duty. There is a great difference between the apathetic repetition of names and their commemoration from the heart—the one is as far from the other as heaven is from earth. But, above all, the name of the Lord Himself, that of His most-pure Mother, and those of the holy angels and saints, must always be pronounced from a pure heart with burning faith and love. In general, the words of prayer must not be merely rushed through with the tongue as if we were turning over the pages of a book or counting money. The water must flow like a stream of living water from its source; our prayer should be the sincere voice of the heart, not a strange, borrowed garment.

Have the same attention and respect for the Word as you have for the living man, and firmly believe that "the Word of God is [as] quick and powerful" as a living being, as an angel. Because of its spiritual subtlety, it is "*piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*" (Heb 4:12). The Word of God is God Himself; therefore, when you speak, remember that you are concerned with living, active beings, not with dead, powerless beings. Know that you must pronounce every word with faith

and assurance. Words are living pearls. "*Nor cast your pearls before swine*" (Matt 7:6).

Proof that man was created by the Word of God is contained in the very word "person," as well as the name he was given in baptism or during the rite of naming. While a person lives, he is called, and responds to, this name. His name comprises him, so to speak. Finally, when he dies and when his mortal remains are buried in the ground, only his name remains as a witness of his creation by the Word of God. His name is his (and our) immaterial, eternal inheritance, as is his soul.

* * *

During prayer, it is necessary, first of all, that the object of the prayer should be definitely expressed, or at least there should be a clear sense of it and desire for it in the heart. Secondly, it is necessary for this desire to be expressed with feeling and living trust in the mercy of the Lord or the Theotokos. Finally, there must be a firm intention not to sin in future and to fulfill God's will in everything. "*You have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you*" (John 5:14).

When you pray for anything, either to the Lord or to the most-pure Theotokos or the angels and saints, asking their intercession before God for yourself or for others, consider the words you use to express your petitions and needs, as the very petitions themselves, the very needs that you pray for, and believe that you have already a sure pledge of receiving the objects of your prayer in the very words that describe these objects. In other words, when you pray for your health or the health of someone else, consider the word "health" as the very thing itself. Believe that you have already received it through the mercy and omnipotence of God, for the word itself may in an instant become action with the Lord, and you will unfailingly receive what you ask for in return for your unshaken faith. "*Ask, and it will be given to you*" (Matt 7:7). "*Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them*" (Mark 11:24).

During prayer, pay no attention to the enemy's darkness, fire, and attacks, but establish your heart in the words of the prayer, being assured that they contain within them the treasures of the Holy Spirit—truth, light, life-giving fire, forgiveness of sins, freedom, peace, joy of the heart, and blessedness.

The great names of the Most-holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—when invoked with living, genuine faith and reverence, or even when thought of in the soul, are truly God Himself, and they call down God Himself in three persons into our soul. But of God, "*and through Him and to Him are all things*" (Rom 11:36); therefore, if you are united to the Tri-hypostatic God with living faith and virtue, especially meekness, humility, and mercy, ask of Him whatever you desire, whatever the Holy Spirit teaches you to ask, and it shall be given to you, either quickly, in a moment, in an hour, or after the passage some time, according to the judgment of God's great wisdom. "*Desire of Me, and I shall give Thee*" (Psalm 2:8). Everything that you ask for is certainly less, infinitely less, than the Giver Himself, since it derives its existence from Him. And since the Giver Himself is an infinite, simple Being, Who can in a mystical manner be comprised in a single thought, in a single word, then believe that a single word of yours, a single petition concerning the fulfillment of anything, can, at the Lord's will, immediately become deed. "*He spake, and they came to be; He commanded, and they were created*" (Psalm 32:9). Remember the wonders that Moses worked, remember how that man of God was a god to Pharaoh, and how instantaneously, at his word, or at a movement of his hand or staff, everything either changed or appeared out of nowhere. O great God, most glorified God, God of wonders, God of unspeakable mercy, generosity, and love for man, glory to You always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages! Amen.

Pride in matters of faith manifests itself when a proud man dares to make himself a judge of religion and the Church, saying, "I do not believe in this, and I do not acknowledge this; this I find superfluous, that unnecessary, and this strange or absurd." Pride in faith also manifests itself in boastfulness, in the proud man's assumed knowledge of everything, while in reality he knows very little or his spiritual eyes are entirely blind. "That is not worth reading," he says. "It is all well known; these sermons are not worth reading: they contain the one same thing that I already know." Human pride reaches monstrous proportions when an ordinary mortal dares to compare himself with God's saints, and does not see their great and wonderful perfections acquired by their own exploits, with the assistance of the grace of God (perfections with which God Himself has crowned and glorified them). Such a person says: "Why should I honor them, and especially why should I pray to them? They are men like I; I pray to God alone." He does

not know that God Himself commanded us to seek the prayers of the righteous for ourselves. "*For I will accept him*" (Job 42:8).

Pride in faith also manifests itself by insensibility to sins, by Pharisaical self-justification and self-praise, by insensibility to God's mercies, by ingratitude to God for all that is good, by not feeling the need of praising God's greatness. All those who do not pray to the Almighty God, "*to the God of all spirits and of all flesh,*"[46] to their Life, do not pray because of their secret pride.

If, when you are praying to the Mother of God, you do not find proper reverence for Her in your heart, and instead you are attacked by evil and blasphemous thoughts, then say the following words of praise worthily applied to Her: "You, our Lady, are all light, all holiness, all mercy, all wisdom. You, as the Mother of the Almighty, can do all things. You are ever one and the same, the all-perfect Mother of the all-perfect King of Glory!"

Unbelief betrays itself by its falsity, its having nothing in common with truth. An unbelieving heart is restless, anxious, weak, inconsistent, while a believing one is, on the contrary, calm, blissful, exalted, and strong.

When you pray to the Lord, the Theotokos, the angels, or the saints, do not consider it difficult for them to fulfill your petitions, or the petitions of other believers, but believe that it is as easy and simple for the Lord to give any blessing to His people (and equally easy for His most-pure Mother and the angels and the saints) as it is for you to think of it. Besides, since God is ever-flowing, infinite goodness, he desires and always seeks to impart His goodness to His creatures, if only they turn to Him with faith, hope, and love, like children to their father, recognizing their sinfulness, poverty, destitution, blindness, and infirmity without Him.

When you pray to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, one God in Trinity, do not seek Him outside yourself, but contemplate Him within, dwelling in you, entirely penetrating and knowing you. "*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* (1 Cor 3:16). "*I will walk among you and be your God*" (Lev 26:12). "*I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and … I will be a Father to you*" (2 Cor 6:16, 18). "*O Lord, Thou hast examined me, and known me*" (Psalm 138:1), says David.

If, during prayer, you doubt in the possibility of the fulfillment of any of your petitions, remember that God can give you all things except direct evil, which is only proper to the devil. Remember that the word itself (i.e., your

petition concerning anything) is your pledge that its fulfillment is possible, for if you can only think of something, either possible or impossible to yourself, then this "something" is absolutely possible to the Lord, to Whom the thought is already act, if it pleases Him. Even for you, the blessing already exists in the word potentially, if not in deed. God answers our petitions through the Son, the Creator, and through the Holy Spirit, the Accomplisher. Not only can He accomplish all things, He also has infinite mercy, through which He is the ever-flowing Source of existence and all its attendant benefits. He is the God of benefits, mercy, and generosity. "*Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you*" (Matt 7:7). Add to this God's great wisdom, by which, in bestowing gifts upon us, He chooses what is best, most appropriate for our body and spirit. All that is required of you is firm, undoubting faith in the possibility of the Lord's fulfillment of your petition. Also, your petition should absolutely be good, for good, and not for anything evil. "*How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him*" (Matt 7:11).

When praying to God, we must have such firm, unshaken faith that doubt in anything would be difficult or even impossible; therefore, we must inscribe the following words in our hearts: "*With God all things are possible*" (Mark 10:27). We must also have the firm assurance that God fulfills everything, that He is love and mercy, that His activity and nature is to create, to give, to forgive, to be bountiful, to fulfill our requests. "*And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive*" (Matt 21:22; Mark 11:24). Also, we must carefully watch our heart, lest it utter falsehood. Every word should come out of the depth of the heart: "*out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord!*" (Psalm 129:1). In other words, we must be most zealous for the truth and sincerity of our prayer. We must make the words of prayers composed by other people our own words, and we must believe every word of these prayers to be true.

Be zealous for love alone. All things will pass away, but love will eternally remain, as God Himself, Who is Love.

* * *

Life is a great experiential science. Nothing is more difficult than to pass through this science, this narrow way, these narrow gates. Those who have

not learned, either through their mother's instruction or at school, to have faith in God and the fear of God and to lead a pious life will find it especially difficult to study in the school of life. Sometimes, the intelligent person to whom all earthly learning comes easy, who has become greatly esteemed for his abilities, shows himself to be ignorant in the school of life. Not only this, but sometimes he is generally useless, both in his family life and in any public service, either because of his intractable character or his ungovernable heart. His life is a calamity, a series of disasters, like a vessel loaded with a heavy cargo put out to sea during a storm without rudder, sails, or rigging.

* * *

Remember, you reasonable creature, that everything was created by the Word and exists in Him, and have undoubting faith that creation or transformation by the word of your own mouth, through the power of God, is the most normal occurrence. Therefore, have the highest respect for the word, and do not use it in vain. Above all, do not use it as an instrument of falsehood, for the Lord will condemn those who speak falsely. O my God! The world of spirits and matter are created and exist by the Word of God, Who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is a simple Being, a Spirit, a Unity worshipped in Three Hypostases.

* * *

When asking various blessings of God, believe that God is everything to everyone. Do you ask for health? Believe that He is your health. Do you ask for faith? He is your faith. Do you ask for love? He is your love. Do you ask for peace and joy? He is your peace and joy. Do you ask for help against visible and invisible enemies? He is your all-powerful help. Whatever blessing you ask of Him, He is that very blessing, as well as all blessings, and if He considers the blessing beneficial, He will be this blessing for you. "*God may be all in all*" (1 Cor 15:28).

The word in the mouths of some is spirit and life, while in the mouths of others it is the letter that kills (for instance, during prayer and preaching). "*The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life*" (John 6:63). Our words should also give life, for we are images of God the Word.

As the body breathes air, the soul breathes by God's mercies. If a father and mother find it ordinary, natural, and necessary to give their children their daily bread or fish (our most common food) and do not give them a stone instead of bread, or a serpent instead of fish, though they are evil by nature, then, how much more, how infinitely more bountiful is our Heavenly Father, Who is true Goodness? How much more shall "*He give good things to those who ask Him!*" (Matt 7:11)? In the same way that water flows in abundance on the earth, and anyone may come and freely draw it and drink, the Lord is like a deep spiritual ocean of living water. Let each one come and draw spiritual blessings with the spiritual cup of true, firm, and unashamed faith. Only stretch out this spiritual cup and you shall unfailingly and abundantly receive of the Water of Life, the forgiveness of sins, and peace of conscience. But fear doubt, for it will deprive you of the means of obtaining every mercy of God.

If you do not have firm, unashamed faith in the most Merciful and Almighty God, do not rush to ask Him to grant you any blessing, otherwise the devil will strike and wound you with doubt or unbelief in the possibility of the fulfillment of your prayer, and you will go away from before the face of God ashamed, despondent, and gloomy. Do not be frivolous, but first sit down, count your spiritual estate, according to the Lord's words, that is, measure your faith, "*whether he has enough to finish it*," lest the demons, seeing your lack of forethought, begin to mock you, saying: "*This man began to build and was not able to finish*" (Luke 14:28–30). Thus, before prayer, realize the degree of your faith, and, having found it sufficient, living, firm, and unashamed, "*come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need*" (Heb 4:16).

In the material world, God benefits us through the sun, lighting and warming us, the earth, with all its fullness, and through air, water, plants, and animals. In the spiritual world, the Lord also directly benefits us, enlightening our minds and hearts, helping, saving, forgiving, and protecting us by His grace (also through His priests). He benefits us still more through the mediation of His servants the angels (who are called ministering spirits), the patriarch, prophets, apostles, hierarchs, martyrs, monastics, righteous men, and especially the most exalted of all creatures, His most-pure Mother. These holy beings serve God for our salvation. "*Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?*" (Heb 1:14). They are the resplendent noetic rays of the

eternal sun of righteousness, God. How then shall we not call on them to help and intercede for us, these blessed beings who have received from the Lord Himself grace to help in the work of our salvation. How can we remain without proper reverence and gratitude to them? Would it conform with the laws of merely human social life and propriety?

Lutherans ask: "Why should we pray to the saints? We pray to God Himself." But they contradict themselves, for in that case why do they ask a pastor to pray for them? They might as well pray without a pastor if everyone has equal access to God and no one needs sanctified suppliants for our sake. What blindness! They say that by praying to the saints, we worship idols. This is untrue. We do not pray to any saint as we pray to God. We only ask his prayers for ourselves. Is there a shadow of idolatry in this? We ask God's living ministers and suppliants to pray to Him for us, and, in exactly the same way, we ask prayerful help of heavenly suppliants, who, from their love for God, have great boldness before Him. In addition, very many of them, even while they lived here on earth, were already intercessors before God for the world. There, in heaven, this activity is not only continued, but increased, and it is especially powerful, because it is no longer hindered by the heavy, coarse flesh. All the saints, though they have finished their earthly course, still live, "*for He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him*" (Luke 20:38).

"*Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you!*" (Luke 1:28). Thus the holy Church invokes the most-holy Virgin Theotokos. But the Lord is also with every pious soul that believes in Him. The Lord's abiding with the Virgin Mary before she conceived the Saviour is not limited to the most-pure Virgin alone. The Lord is with every believing soul: "The Lord is with thee." These words may be said to everyone who keeps the Lord's commandments. The Lord is near to all, only people themselves are far from Him in their hearts, in their thoughts, intentions, and the inclination of their hearts, as well as their words and deeds, which are contrary to the law of God. "*I am with you always,*" says our Lord, Who was born of the most-holy Virgin, "*even to the end of the age*" (Matt 28:20). He is with every one of us, at all times, throughout all generations, on the entire space of the world, even to the end of the world.

I am in God, with God, before God, under God. He is my life. For the life of my body, He has provided air, water, and food. For the life of my soul, He Himself "is everywhere present and filleth all things." He Himself is air,

meat, and drink. I continually stand, walk, sit, sleep, eat, and wherever I may be, I am always and in every place in God. The first is an image of the second. In order to breathe, it is necessary to keep the mouth and nostrils open; correspondingly, for the life of the spirit, prayer is necessary. To make our prayer sincere, to fill our soul with it and to concentrate fully, we must watch our heart, gathering or fixing the mind and heart on God alone. We must entirely renounce every falsehood, duplicity, and earthly attachment.

The worst, constant error of our heart, against which we should struggle unceasingly our entire life—at night, in the morning, and during the day—is the secret thought that we can be anywhere and at any time without God and outside Him, even for a single moment. We must unceasingly establish our heart in God, from Whom it continually turns away. Great progress in the Christian life would be attained by him who could truly exclaim with Hannah, the mother of Samuel, "*My heart rejoiceth* ("*is established"* in the Slavonic) *in the Lord; My horn is exalted in the Lord. I smile at my enemies, because I rejoice in Your salvation*" (1 Sam 2:1).

It is necessary to remember that God is the Living God Who gives life to all, that the Mother of the Lord also lives, that the angels and saints likewise live, and that they hear us in God.

* * *

"*Praying in the Holy Spirit*" (Jude 1:20). The Holy Spirit is air for the soul, and Christ is life-giving food. They are inseparable, the Spirit and the Son. As air and food are equally necessary and inseparable from each other, so the Holy Spirit and the Son are inseparable in Their essence and Their activity in us, and God the Father dispenses his benefits primarily through the Son and the Holy Spirit, as their Origin and Cause.

Those who touched the Saviour's garment were made whole. Why are those who use holy water with faith healed, even in our day? Because the cross, immersed in water, with the prayer of faith, is as though the life-giving Lord Himself. As the Saviour's garments were penetrated with His life, so is the water, in which the life-giving cross is immersed, also penetrated with life, and thus received the power to heal.

No one is closer to us than God. He is the God of hearts, of our very hearts, and the heart, in turn, is nearer than anything to us. It is the whole man, "*the hidden person of the heart*" (1 Pet 3:4), as the Apostle Peter says.

I was on my way to matins. The sun was in the east, and was reflected in a lantern hanging on a post. The reflection was so full and bright that it was impossible to look at, since it is impossible to look at the sun itself. I thought to myself, if the material, created sun is reflected with such brightness in the transparent glass, then is not the noetic, uncreated Sun, God Himself, reflected in the human heart pure from sin? Is He not resplendently reflected in His saints, who, for the sake of union with Him and love for Him, cleansed themselves and continue to cleanse themselves here "*from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God*" (2 Cor 7:1)? Yes, He is resplendently reflected in the souls of His chosen ones, and these pure souls, these images of God, like transparent glass, glitter like gold in the sun, like the purest diamond, but they shine for God and the angels, not revealing their brightness to people, even if at times, by God's will, they do shine even for them, through the light of their faith, virtues, like a candle put on a candlestick that lights a room, with all those who are in it (Matt 5:15). Also, if the created sun is reflected in the glass of a lantern, then is not the uncreated noetic Sun wholly and essentially reflected in His most-pure Flesh and Blood on the altar of the Lord by the action of the Life-giving Holy Spirit? Yes, He is there reflected with all His light and all love: "*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him*" (John 6:56). The Body and Blood are truly the whole Christ.

Our prayers contain petitions, so that our proud flesh, ascribing everything to itself, becomes humbled. Our prayers contain thanksgiving, so that our flesh awakens to God's innumerable benefits. Our prayers praise God, so that our carnal man stops seeking praise for himself alone.

* * *

Prayer is proof of my spiritual nature, of my likeness to God, the pledge of my future deification and blessedness. I was created from nothing; I am nothing before God, since I have nothing of my own; but, by the mercy of God, I am a being endued with reason, with a heart, with free will, and with my reason and freedom I can, by inclining my heart to Him, continually increase in myself His infinite kingdom, increase more and more His gifts within me, draw from Him, as from an ever-flowing, inexhaustible source, every blessing, both spiritual and material, especially spiritual. Prayer

reminds me that I am the image of God, that by the humble and thankful disposition of my soul before God, and by my free will, I infinitely increase in myself the spiritual gifts of God, that I can thus infinitely improve myself and can increase to infinity my likeness to God, the heavenly blessedness to which I am predestined. O! Prayer is the sign of the great dignity with which the Creator has honored me. It reminds me simultaneously of my nothingness (I am nothing, and have nothing of my own; therefore, I ask God for everything) and of my most exalted dignity (I am an image of God; I am deified; I may be called the friend of God, like Abraham, the father of believers, if only I believe without doubt in the existence, mercy, and omnipotence of my God, and strive to become like Him during this life by doing works of love and mercy).

* * *

Constant, fervent prayer gives us the most sincere and firm conviction of the immortality of our soul and of the bliss of the future immaterial world, for a person derives all the delights of prayer from the God the Spirit. We take all the power of prayer from Him, and also by His grace from the Mother of God (it is She who saves our souls from misfortunes, who gives us peace, joy, and new life), and from the angels and saints.

* * *

"*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*" (1 Cor 3:16). "*If the Spirit of Him Who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He Who raised up Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit Who dwells in you*" (Rom 8:11). Brothers, be attentive and revere the Holy Spirit, ever dwelling in you, and remember that the mystery and wonder of your resurrection from the dead will be accomplished by the same Spirit Who now dwells in you by the grace and gift of Christ, through baptism by water and the Spirit, through repentance, and especially through the communion of His life-giving Mysteries.

God is Truth, and my prayer should be truth as well as life. God is Light, and my prayer should be offered in the light of the mind and the heart. God is Fire, and my prayer as well as life should be fiery. God is perfectly free, and my prayer should be the free outpouring of the heart. What riches there

are in the human spirit! I have only to think of God, only to desire a union of my heart with God, and He is immediately with me. Neither the walls of a house, nor the bars of a prison, nor mountains, nor gulfs shall hinder this union. God is immediately with me, as are the angels and saints. With God, they are all before my eyes, close to my heart, as the nearest of friends, as those who are akin to me. O, the riches of the human spirit!

* * *

The Spirit is so simple that He passes through every spiritual and material being—through all reasonable beings, through all creatures not endued with reason, through the heavenly bodies, the earth and all its organic and inorganic matter. The Spirit is not in the least limited by them, being always higher than they, quickening them as the Spirit of God, or He easily passes through inanimate matter such as mountains, stones, walls of buildings without quickening them, as if there was no matter whatsoever there. God is the ultimate Being, and in comparison with Him it is as though there are no other spiritual or material beings at all. Therefore, I can truly say that I am always with God. I can even say that it is as though only God and I exist. "*Thou art with me*" (Psalm 22:4), said David. "*I am with you*" (Acts 18:10), says the Lord to the Apostle Paul.

When praying fervently, either standing, sitting, lying down, or walking, sometimes we are suddenly visited by the Spirit of God and hear His voice. At such a time, we notice that He penetrates into the soul, not through the mouth or nose, nor through the ears (although the Saviour bestowed the Spirit through the word and breathing, and "*faith comes by hearing*" [Rom 10:17]), but straight through the body into the heart, in the same way as the Lord passed through the walls of the house when He came to the Apostles after the Resurrection. He acts suddenly, like electricity, and more quickly than any electric current; we feel unusually light, because we are suddenly freed from our burden of sins, and we are visited by the spirit of contrition for sins, the spirit of devotion, peace, and joy. Remember how the angel appeared in the locked prison to deliver the Apostle Peter: the doors were shut, the keepers standing before the doors, but the angel suddenly appeared before him, and at the same moment a light shone in the prison (Acts 12:7). In the same way, the Spirit of God suddenly visits the chamber of our soul, the body, and the light shines in it.

* * *

How do the saints hear us? They hear us, since we are united in the Holy Spirit: "*that they also may be one in Us*" (John 17:21), as members of the one Church of God, having Christ as the head, animated by the one Spirit of God. The saints see and hear us in the Holy Spirit in the same way that we see and hear with our bodily eyes and ears through the media of light and air, but our bodily sight and hearing are very imperfect compared to spiritual sight and hearing. From a great distance, we cannot see many objects and cannot hear many sounds, but spiritual sight and hearing are perfect—not a single movement of the heart, not a single thought, not a single word, intention, or desire escapes them, because the Spirit of God, in Whom the saints dwell, see, and hear us, is all-perfect, omniscient, all-seeing, and all-hearing, for He is everywhere present.

The power of prayer is sufficient, for example, to open or shut heaven, to transform fire into dew. Whose prayer is especially powerful? The prayer of the Theotokos ("imploring thine all-powerful aid, I cry unto thee: O Sovereign")[47] and of the saints in heaven. On earth, the prayers of God's priests are especially powerful, as those placed before the Throne of God by God Himself in order to pray for themselves and for His people, for Himself and "*for the people's sins*" (Heb 9:7). Equally powerful are the prayers of monastics and hermits, "*for I accept him*" (Job 42:8). Christians are slothful in prayer, and this leads to lack of faith, hope, and love, sins and iniquities, spiritual and bodily misfortunes.

Priest of God! Believe with your whole heart; believe always in the grace, given to you by God, to pray for God's people. Let not this gift of God become useless in you, for through it you can save many souls. The Lord speedily hears your heartfelt prayer for His people, and easily inclines to be merciful to them, as He did after Moses's, Aaron's, Samuel's, and the Apostles' prayers. Avail yourself of every opportunity for prayer—in church, when you celebrate divine services or a sacrament, in private houses, during prayers and thanksgivings. Everywhere and at all times think of the salvation of God's people, and you shall also obtain great grace from God for yourself.

* * *

Every moment you live only by the grace of the Life-giving Trinity. Be as convinced of this as you know that you are illumined by the sun, fed by meat and drink, and breathe by means of air. These three things unite into one for your sake.

* * *

The substance of the world is as nothing (Psalm 38:6); everywhere and in all things the Life-giving Spirit of God is higher than everything. When you pray to God, imagine that matter is as though nonexistent, and that all creatures are as though nonexistent; God alone is omnipresent and one, Who has no defined limit, Who fills all thing with Himself, Who embraces all, Who creates and sustains all. If you free yourself from attachments to material things and dedicate yourself to prayer and fasting, then in you the Spirit will as though swallow up the flesh, and you will become spiritual and able to contemplate God the Spirit everywhere in nature. On the other hand, those who are attached to earthly things, especially food, drink, and money, become "*sensual persons, … not having the Spirit*" (Jude 1:19). And in everything they only see the flesh, not contemplating the Spirit, and even rejecting the spiritual aspect in things.

Wherever we find an object with an obvious construction to it, there a Constructor must absolutely be assumed, because no object, having in itself neither reason nor power, can build itself. Nothing can grow or produce fruit on its own: it is evident that at every moment it must be governed by an infinite Mind, by an All-powerful Hand.

* * *

In the same way as the material sun is reflected in its full circle, with its full radiance in many transparent objects on earth, the spiritual Sun, God, is pleased to reflect Himself in countless beings, both in heaven (angels) and on earth (people). The light of the material sun is not restricted by dense though transparent bodies, but, passing through them unimpeded, shines even in the rooms of a house enclosed from all sides, or in transparent objects turned toward it. In the same way, spiritual light is not restricted for spiritual beings by any material obstacles, neither by the walls of a house, nor by the dark walls and vaults of prisons, nor by huge mountains, nor in caverns where the servants of God were concealed, nor in the abysses of the

earth. God penetrates everything and shines forth everywhere, in every soul capable of receiving the light of the heavenly truth into itself. "*Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them*" (Acts 16:25).

When we pray, the ears of the Lord incline to our prayer. He is then, as He always is, as near to us as His icon, before which we stand, even much nearer. He is before our very heart. His presence near us is as obvious as the visible icon; therefore, the icon is only a visible representation of how near the Lord is to us, how He looks at us and hears us. God's saints, in the Holy Spirit, are also as near to us as the Holy Spirit Himself, Who is everywhere present and fillest all things, "*Whose house we are*" (Heb 3:6; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19). Through the Holy Spirit they see and hear us in the same way as we see and hear people speaking to us. For the Holy Spirit is the medium through which we see and hear even ordinary things.

You have seen that on the icons of the saints, the Lord Jesus Christ is represented above, with the imperial scepter in one hand and with the other extended in blessing. This is quite intentional. From heaven, the Lord always watches over those who battle for His sake on earth; He actively helps them, as the almighty King, in their struggle with the enemies of salvation; He blesses His ascetic laborers with "*peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Rom 14:17) and crowns them with the crown of life after they have finished their earthly exploits. Thus, all you Christians, strengthen yourselves in faith and hope, looking to Jesus, "*the author and finisher of our faith*" (Heb 12:2), Who ever watches over you and sees all your acts from the heights of heaven, as He looked down at the proto-martyr Stephen, opening heaven and His glory to his gaze, or as He looked down at Saul, afterward Paul, also revealing Himself to him in the heavens, enlightening him with His light, and calling him with His voice (Acts 7:55, 56; 9:3, 4).

The purpose of our life is union with God in this life through faith, hope, and love, and in the future life through perfected love. But see how the enemy and we ourselves pervert this purpose here on earth. We unite our hearts to as many objects as we have passionate attachments. Sometimes (O horror!) our love is directed at silver, food, drink, dress, dwelling, furniture, other people, until we completely forget God. Sometimes we are proud, envious, we hate, we lie, and then we unite ourselves directly with the devil, who is malice, falsehood, pride, envy personified. How we insult our Master at these times, Him Who created us in His image and likeness! How

we pervert this divinely drawn image, modeled on God Himself! But we think of this too little; we are too ignorant of that which is most essential for us—union with God.

* * *

Whoever knows the constant malice of the bodiless spirits against us will not easily despair, even if they use every possible weapon they have to plunge his heart into despondency, he will not grow irritated at everything, knowing that they (the enemies) strive in every way to incite us to irritation, to make us angry, envious, to attach us to money and material gain. But there is one condition necessary for this: we must be vigilant, for the enemy not infrequently disguises himself in the form of our self-love and ambition, pretending to defend our welfare, while in reality he is absolutely destroying us. O Christian hope! How many are deprived of you through the snares of invincible enemies! How many despair and take their own lives! Think of those who of their own free will have laid hands on themselves by hanging, by drowning themselves, or in other ways. Think of drunkards and others such people who slowly take their own lives.

The Lord spoke a word of promise, and His word will come to pass. He speaks, and will it not be? The Lord points to the laws of nature, to their constancy and firmness, as a proof of the faithfulness of His promises.

During prayer, or while reading the Word of God or other holy books (and some well-intentioned secular literature, in which, for example, God's providence plays an active role in the events described), or during edifying conversation, you have felt in your body "a still small voice," as though a current of electricity passed through your body. It is the Lord visiting you. "*A still small voice*" (1 Kgs 19:12), and the Lord was in it.

When you pray to the Theotokos or any saint, firmly call to mind that you are a member of the Church in which Our Lady is the chief stone of the edifice, "*the First Origin of spiritual renovation,*"[48] and know that you are closely, inwardly united with all the heavenly dwellers as one of the stones of this edifice, though not yet a firm, strong one. By thus understanding yourself, you will understand why prayers so easily reach the saints, for we are all under one Head, Christ (Eph 1:22), and we are all animated by the same Spirit of God.

The Lord is the cause and constant support (power) of my physical, bodily life, through the action of my lungs, stomach, heart, veins, and muscles. He also sustains my spiritual life, through the mind and thought, through the enlightenment of my heart by His Light.

* * *

Wonderful is the power of faith! Only the living thought of God, only heartfelt faith in Him is required, and He is with me. Only genuine repentance for sins is required, and He is with me. A single good thought, and He is with me. A single pious feeling, and He is with me. But the devil enters into me through impure, evil, blasphemous thoughts—doubt, fear, pride, irritability, anger, avarice, envy; therefore, his power over me entirely depends on me. If only I keep watch over myself and continually preserve the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in my mind with faith and love, he will be powerless to do me any harm.

* * *

Strive to do everything in opposition to the wishes of the bodiless adversary. He incites you to pride, self-glorification, and condemnation of your brother, but you must humble yourself to the earth and ashes, condemn yourself as severely as possible, and praise your brother in your heart. If your brother, through the action of the enemy, behaves proudly and maliciously to you, you must still treat him with humility and love. If the enemy incites you to avarice, be generous with goodwill. Act thus in all similar circumstances, and you will obtain great grace from God, and you will see this grace with your spiritual eyes. If you do not have inner strength to act in this way—the enemy being, as you say, very powerful—then ask for it in prayer from the Almighty, at every time and every hour, and He will help you.

* * *

According to the measure of the “spirit and truth” with which you begin to pray before a holy icon (of the Saviour, for example), the spirit of Him Who is represented upon the icon will be attracted to the icon. If your faith in the presence of the Person represented on the icon attains such a height

that you see that Person as though standing before you, then by grace He will actually be there. The wonderworking images that speak, which shed tears, blood, etc. are examples of this, and this is why such images all look extraordinarily alive and expressive. What is impossible for God, Who is able to give life to stone and form man out of it? He can miraculously accomplish the same with a painted image. "*All things are possible to him who believes*" (Mark 9:23), and the Most High miraculously come down from heaven for the sake of him that believes. He is similarly united with, and works miracles through, the sign of the life-giving Cross.

What is man, if not the image of God, artistically formed from earth (because the human body is nothing but earth)? Therefore, do not wonder at God appearing in material images, and even speaking through the mouth of an image, for "*with God all things are possible*" (Mark 10:27). When it was required, He even spoke with a human voice from the mouth of an ass (Num 22:28).

"It is so vivid and lifelike," a portrait is sometimes described, "that it could almost talk." If man is capable of giving life to a canvas, a board, or paper with his artistic talent, then what can be impossible for God? Can He not breathe life into an image and give it the capability of speaking, if it pleases Him? You have done everything that you could, artist; now let the Lord complete your work, and He will make the image speak.

* * *

There is a spiritual world. There is a communion of souls, even at a distance, even with the departed. They see and hear us, and here is an evident proof of this: a woman whose husband was lying ill about four hundred miles from her, and who soon afterward died, one evening saw the people who came to visit him, what he was doing, and she even heard the words that he spoke. Do not the saints see us in the same manner? Do not they hear our prayers in the same manner?

* * *

When I look at the faces of others, I see my own face, for we are all one, created by God from one single man, from the same blood, and we are all made in the image of God. Therefore, we must look at all purely, without suspicion or hatred, with no anger or cunning or avarice, but with pure,

godly love. Also, when I look at icons, at the faces of the saints, the image of the Mother of God and the God-man Himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, I see myself in them, for they are also human, and through His incarnation and becoming man, Jesus Christ, our God, has wholly clothed Himself in me, having thus honored mankind with an immeasurable honor, driving away the stench of sin from those who believe and are baptized in Him, and making them fragrant with the holiness of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them through faith, baptism, and the Communion of His Divine Body and Blood. Therefore, strive to see yourself in others, that others may see themselves in you. Love all as yourself. Also see yourself and mankind in Christ, in His most-pure Mother, and in the images of the saints, and assimilate yourself to God and the saints by imitating their holiness, that they, too, may see themselves in you, as you increase in likeness to God and them by virtue. Then they will recognize you as their member when you appear at the universal judgment, and they will receive you into their midst as one of their assembly.

* * *

I should be joyful that very often I bear in my mind and heart, and pronounce with my lips, the name of God, the name of the Theotokos, the names of the holy angels and saints, either all of the ones regularly commemorated during the course of a given year, or the ones especially mentioned in the daily prayers or in the office of the blessing of the water. For the name of God, as well as the name of the Mother of God, our all-powerful Intercessor, remembered sincerely, from the whole heart, sanctifies, quickens, and comforts the heart. The saints, our intercessors before God, pray for us when we call upon them in prayer, and they enlighten us by their manifold virtues. It is good to be united with God and the heavenly dwellers.

* * *

Through prayer we obtain forgiveness of sins. "*I forgave you all that debt because you begged Me*" (Matt 18:32). Experience proves the same.

"*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him*" (John 6:56). This is evident to the senses, and experience confirms it. Most blessed, most full of life is the person who communes of the Holy

Mysteries with faith and heartfelt contrition for his sins. This truth is evident to the senses, and is further proved by the following contrast: if we approach the Holy Cup without sincere contrition and with doubt, Satan enters us and dwells in us, destroying our soul. This, too, is extremely evident to the senses.

"All things are near to God," says the Russian proverb. This is true: all spiritual and rational creatures, angels, the souls of the departed, all living men, all animals, all material worlds are near to God. The Spirit of God passes through all things—a reasoning, pure, most refined Spirit, dwelling in every believing, pious soul. "*For all the beasts of the forest are Mine*" (Psalm 40:10), says He. "*I am with you always, even to the end of the age*" (Matt 28:20). Since He is an infinite Spirit, for God nothing is far away, but all things are before Him, as on the palm of His hand. He is everywhere, and all are in Him. Everything lives and exists in Him.

God, the created spirits (angels), the souls of the departed, and the souls of the living are rational beings, and their thought is rapid, and in a certain way it is omnipresent. Think of them with your whole heart, and they will be present with you. God will always and necessarily be present with you, and the others will sometimes be as well, by the gift and power of God. "*In the day of my trouble I reached out to God*" (Psalm 76:3). Why? Because He is with you and in you.

When our heart is covered in the darkness of Satan, the darkness of the passions, then it denies God, although it should, in that case, deny its own existence. It has become darkened, and therefore its spiritual eyes are closed and do not see God, but this does not mean that there is no God. "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*" (Psalm 13:1). Truly a madman.

The name of Jesus Christ, or a sincere thought of Jesus Christ, is united to great power, able to drive away the passions and give peace to the heart. The same may be applied to the names of the holy angels and saints, beginning with the Mother of God, ending with the holy and righteous fools for Christ's sake.[49] Only invoke their names sincerely, and by the grace of God they, too, will help you.

The icons of the Saviour in every Orthodox house show His omnipresence, His sovereignty in every place, while the images of the Saints reveal their presence with us, their nearness to us, by the grace of God, as fellow-members of the one body of the Church, united under the one Head, Christ.

* * *

"*As You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us*" (John 17:21). This is the reason why we must pray to the saints: they are in God, and God is in them (1 John 3:24), and this is why they hear us, since they are in the omnipresent God. "*For holy art Thou, O our God, and Thou restest in the saints*" (Exclamation at Vespers).

For the sake of our faith alone, the mountains of the heart—the heights and burdens of our sins—are removed. This is why, when Christians release themselves from the burden of their sins by repentance and confession, they sometimes say, "Thank God, a mountain has fallen off my shoulders!"

In prayer, sincerely striving to amend one's life is indispensable.

* * *

If the electric telegraph allows us to quickly communicate with people who are far away from us, then living faith, like telegraph wires, allows speedy communication with God, the angels, and the saints. Since we trust in the speed of the electric current and its ability to always reach its destination, we should also trust completely in the quickness of the prayer of faith to reach its destination. Send your petition to God and the saints with the telegraph of faith, and you will quickly receive an answer. The answers received by telegraph are simple, but only the experienced can decode them; the actions of the God of all spirits, of all flesh, and of the saints on the human heart are also simple, but only the experienced understand them.

* * *

O wonderful proof of the omnipresence of God! Let us say that your heart has been wounded by attachment, even a momentary one, to silver, and it immediately begins to ache, but as soon as you say to God with your whole heart, "You are my only treasure, You are my silver and gold, my food and raiment," you will immediately feel consoled.

* * *

There are many people who worship God in vain. There are also some people who pray, but they are so slothful and evil that as soon as they feel an attack of impure and evil thoughts in their heart and head, they immediately stop praying and run from the church or from the icon in their home.

* * *

If you want your prayer to be life-giving, you must start by establishing your whole heart in the Lord, and exalt your horn in the Lord (1 Sam 2:1).

From the time of man's first sin, people have become so darkened by sin in the very center of their being (the heart), that they often have no sense or feeling of the omnipresence of God, and they think that four walls and a ceiling can conceal them from Him Who fills all things, Who sees even the one hiding himself in secret places? "*Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him? Do I not fill heaven and earth?"* (Jer 23:24). "*I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself*" (Gen 3:10). Of course not!

My soul is in God like a fish in water or a bird in the air, surrounded by Him on all sides, at every time. It lives in Him, it moves in Him, it rests in Him, in Him it has its freedom.

* * *

All these things are witness to the continual presence of the Creator in me and in the whole world: my mind, either bright or dark; my thoughts, either condemning or justifying (Rom 2:15); my heart, either tranquil, joyful or sorrowful, oppressed; the organization of my body, the harmony of the worlds and the earth that we inhabit, with all that is in it and around it. May the dark and foolish thought that my God has forsaken me, that He is not always with me, flee far away from me!

May my soul always remember that God the Word, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit, at every moment upholds all the worlds "*by the word of His power*" (Heb 1:3), among them my own small world of the soul and body. May I remember that He, at every moment, knows not only the number of the hairs of my head, but also the number and quality of my thoughts and the movements of my heart, for everything exists and is done before His brightest eyes.

May my soul understand that since everything comes from God and exists in God, therefore the Lord God in the most perfect manner knows at every moment of the existence and of the nature of every being, and He sustains that existence at every moment through the laws of nature instituted by Him. If we, having written a book, know all its contents and main ideas, so that when other people ask, we can easily describe the theme and the plan of the book, then why do we deny the Lord His omniscience of all worlds, all creatures, all things contained in the world, with all their qualities and environments? Are they not, so to speak, the book of God? And thus, my soul, revere your Creator every moment of your life, and know that at every moment He knows you completely, that He sustains you and gives you life and everything necessary for your existence and welfare. "*How could anything continue to exist unless You will it?*" (Wis 11:25).

People are ashamed to admit that they do not believe in their high calling and destiny of being the priceless image of God, most precious to God, for whom infinitely great blessedness has been prepared and promised in heaven, in union with God. As a poor man does not believe he will in future become a rich and distinguished person, many Christians also do not believe they will possess a wealth of future blessings and will freely be allowed to "*sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus*" (Eph 2:6). We may well wonder how, without any worthiness on our part, we can expect such high honor and glory, such riches. We are self-loving, covetous, avaricious, and therefore we are unable to understand how such infinite Love, such a wise and disinterested Father can exist. It is hard for us to believe that "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16).

Men are perplexed, and, to tell the truth, many do not believe in the honor promised to the righteous in the life to come, because Satan has demeaned mankind in its own eyes. But this honor truly will be, and we must hope to attain it. Man is the image of God, and it is for this that the Son of God became incarnate: to renew His image. This idea is developed in Holy Scripture.

* * *

If at any time you doubt in the existence of God or in the dogma of the Most-holy Trinity, remember the short doxology: “Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, both now and ever, and to the ages of ages,” and think how insignificant you are compared with so many people in the course of history, many of whom were great and divinely illumined minds who unanimously ascribed glory to the Triune God.

* * *

Since our Creator and God is One, He brings together and unites all things, and, for a believing soul, there is nothing far away that He cannot bring near through faith. Do you wish to have a conversation, not with God, Who is everywhere, but with the high and heavenly powers, principalities, archangels, and angels? You can do so. According to your prayer, they will instruct, enlighten, strengthen you in faith. Or do you wish to converse with the departed saints? You can do so. They will be with you at your first heartfelt call, especially the most-holy Virgin Theotokos, our most speedy Intercessor. “*We unceasingly glorify Thee, O Christ, Who hast indescribably joined the earthly to the heavenly, and hast established one Church for angels and men.*”[50] Christ is the head both of angels and men. With such a Head, what is not near to us? And how near to us must the Head be in order to hear us! Experience convinces us that He hears us, as the saints do as well.

The Lord has full respect for the Nature He created and for natural laws, as the creation of His infinite, perfect wisdom. This is why He usually accomplishes His will through the medium of nature and her laws: when He punishes men or blesses them, for example. Therefore, do not require miracles of Him without extreme necessity.

* * *

The Lord especially highly esteems the works of His hands, gifted with reason and free will (i.e., the angels and saints), He works through them for our sanctification and salvation. Therefore, do not say: I only refer to God alone with my needs and prayers. It is sometimes also necessary for you to pray to the saints, as His instruments and tools. The Lord Himself does not wish that the saints, these holy temples of His grace and His Divine Spirit, should remain inactive in the work of our salvation.

* * *

Like young birds under the wings of the mother hen, the whole universe (i.e., the assemblies of angels, men, irrational animals, all material worlds) is under the Lord's wing. He enlightens everyone and everything. Some He illumines with spiritual light, others with material. He warms all—some with spiritual warmth, others with material. In the same way as the mother hen hears the cries and sighs of the young birds under her wing, He sees all our needs. "*I will hide myself under the shelter of Thy wings*" (Psalm 60:5).

It is good for me to pray for others when I partake worthily of the Holy Mysteries. Then the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, my God, is within me, and I feel great boldness before Him. Then the King is within me, as in His palace. I may ask what I will. "*We will come to Him, and make our home with Him*" (John 14:23). "*Ye will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you*" (John 15:7).

During prayer, it is necessary to have such faith that no secret doubt should exist in the heart even for a single moment, not a single thought that God does not hear us. Furthermore, it is necessary for us to imagine God standing before us during the whole time of our prayer and to speak with Him as with a King.

* * *

If we sinners pray and supplicate the Lord for ourselves and others or if the saints pray for others and ask God to fulfill others' needs while still living on earth, then they will continue to do this when they enter eternity and are face to face with God. Through the power of the great intercessory sacrifice of the Son of God, the prayers of the saints, especially the Theotokos, have the power to intercede for us, by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the Lord's recompense for the virtues of the saints.

* * *

The foundation of prayer is the yearning of the image toward its Prototype, the attraction of like to like.

* * *

During prayer, remember that you (i.e., the priest) are a steward of the most precious inheritance of the prayer of the Church, that you are an impure, unworthy steward, and that your work consists in reverently opening your heart and watering it with these pure streams of the words of prayer, but not in reasoning about them at your own free will.

* * *

It is remarkable: today I felt a doubt (of course, suggested by the evil one) about a certain turn of phrase in a prayer, namely the following: "*Thou, Who alone hast power to forgive sins by the prayers of Thy most-holy Mother and of all the saints,*"[51] and I was covered with shame in my false reasoning. The enemy struck me, hindered me, disturbed me during public prayer. What was my false thought? I thought this: "God has the power to forgive sins by the prayers of His most-pure Mother and those of the saints, but not by His own power? How is this possible?" Of course He has this power without the prayers of others. He alone has the power, but in order to honor the virtues of the saints, especially those of His Mother, He accepts their prayerful intercession for us, unworthy ones, although they often remain silent because of our great and frequent transgressions. Remember Moses, who interceded for the Hebrew people and obtained life for them from God, whom they had angered. Some say that God would have spared His people even without Moses's prayers, but in that case God would have been, so to speak, unjust in giving life to those who were not worthy of it, after He Himself had decreed that they should die. However, when Moses, a righteous, meek, and humble man, began to intercede for them, the most just God was appeased at the sight of the righteous man, at his love for God and his people, and for the sake of Moses's virtue, the Lord forgave the unworthy and unrighteous for the sake of the righteous. Even now, at the prayers of His most-pure Mother, He forgives us who are unworthy of His mercy because of our great, frequent sins and iniquities "*If Moses and Samuel stood before Me, My mind would not be favorable toward this people*" (Jer 15:1), said the Lord to Jeremiah concerning the Jews. From this it is evident that the Lord accepts the intercession of the saints for sinners when their sins do not exceed the measure of God's forbearance.

The Lord, knowing the infirmity of our nature, darkened and weighed down by sin, rising with difficulty to God through faith, deigned to come

down to us, even assuming the likeness of our being, taking upon Himself the form of a servant (Phil 2:7) in human flesh. This is Love. But since it was impossible for Him to eternally remain in a human body on earth, and since God's economy ordained His ascension in the flesh to heaven, and for the sake of the infirmity of all future generations of men and in remembrance of His eternal love for them, His suffering and death, He changes ordinary bread and wine into His own Body and Blood by the grace of the Holy Spirit. By His Spirit, He in present wholly in this bread and wine. In the form of bread and wine, Christ the Life-giver, the Lord Himself, is completely present. O unutterable love, truly divine! The Lord used all of His infinitely great wisdom, His infinite power, for our salvation! Our weakness can see the Lord not only through faith, but it can even taste Him with the tongue, and it can especially sense Him with the heart and with the whole soul. Glory to the Lord Who loves us so much!

God grant that our communion with departed relatives never ends, not even after death, that our love may not be extinguished, but may burn with a bright flame, and that constant true remembrance of those at rest may ever remain with us until our own death. "*With the same measure you use, it will be measured to you*" (Mark 4:24; Matt 7:2).

When you are receiving Holy Communion, be as sure that you commune of the Body and Blood of Christ, as you are sure that every moment you breathe air. Say to yourself, "As surely as I constantly breathe the air, so surely do I now receive into myself, together with the air, my Lord Jesus Christ Himself, my breath, my life, my joy, my salvation. He is my breath at every moment of my life, even more than air. He is my word, before any other word; He is my thought, before any other thought; He is my light, before any other light; He is my meat and drink, before any other meat and drink; He is my raiment, before any other raiment; He is my fragrance, before any other fragrance; He is my sweetness, before any other sweetness; He is my father and mother, before any other father and mother. He is firmer ground than the earth itself, and nothing can ever shake Him. Since we earthly creatures forget that at all times we have breath, live, move, and exist only in Him, and since we have "*hewn themselves cisterns —broken cisterns*" (Jer 2:13), for ourselves, He has revealed to us, in His Holy Blood, the source of living Water, flowing into life eternal, and He gives Himself to us as food and drink, "*that we might live through Him*" (1 John 4:9).

As close and quick to act as the evil spirits are, the Lord God, the most-pure Mother of God, the holy angels, and God's saints, are incomparably closer to us, and they act on us even more quickly and easily. The evil spirits can only attack us with God's permission, but the Lord God acts independently with the most complete freedom, since He is "everywhere present and filling all things." The most-pure Mother of God, the holy angels, and the saints intercede for us, since they are one with Him through His grace. "*Thou, O God, hast heard my prayers, and hast given an inheritance unto those that fear Thy name*" (Psalm 60:5). God has given Himself as an inheritance, a possession to those who fear Him. What a great gift!

Prayer is established on faith. I believe that there is a God before whom I lay my prayer; I believe that there is an Almighty Who holds all creatures in the palm of His hand and gives different voices to His creatures for private conversation with each other, though He Himself needs no voice. I hope that my prayer will reach Him. From my mouth to God's ears, as they say. The correspondence between a son and his parents, or between brothers and sisters, between a father and his children, or between friends at a distance from each other also depends on faith. Each correspondent is sure that his correspondent is alive; he hopes that the letter will reach its destination, and will then inspire certain impressions, ideas, and feelings corresponding to those expressed in the writing. He hopes the letter will be answered in the same spirit it was written. In everyday life, we are guided in many things through faith and hope, how much more should we "*walk by faith, not by sight*" (2 Cor 5:7) in the spiritual life!

Whether at home, or at sea, or under the open sky, if you doubt in the presence of God, convince your heart with the following proofs of the sure presence of God in that place. God maintains everything in His power, including my own soul and body, every solid matter, and every liquid and transparent substance; therefore, He also maintains the very air that I breathe, every atom of it. This is why He is called the Pantocrator (ruler of all), for He holds in the palm of His hand all creatures, down to the very smallest. How then is it possible that He should not be anywhere, in all places? How is it possible that the "Truth of things," the origin of their being, should not be everywhere? If you say these words to yourself inwardly, your doubting heart will immediately revive and calm down, which in itself is further proof of the omnipresence of God, especially in

our souls. Glory to You, All-powerful King, for not leaving me in the darkness of hell, but for continually sending me Your light in my darkness! "*For Thou shalt light my lamp, o Lord my God; Thou shalt make my darkness to be light*" (Psalm 17:29).

Whether you are praying or sitting; walking or lying down; thinking, rejoicing, or sorrowing; whether you are well or ill, at home or out, on land or at sea, be continually and fully assured that God sees you clearly, most clearly, all your thoughts, desires, actions in every condition, at every moment of your existence. Be sure that He hears all your words and thoughts more perfectly than the finest-tuned ears, though He Himself has neither eyes nor ears, those composite, complex, and, therefore, imperfect organs (though they are perfect for us), being in His Essence all sight. Therefore, the Greeks called Him *θεός*, or "all-hearing" or, to speak more precisely, all light and vision.

* * *

Remember constantly that the light of your soul, thoughts, and heart comes from Jesus Christ. He is the light of the eye of our heart, not appearing and disappearing, like the light of the sun, which cannot penetrate an opaque substance, which leaves many things in darkness, which cannot enlighten a single soul in the darkness of sin. He is the "*true Light, which gives light to every man*" (i.e., the principal part of his being, the soul) "*coming into the world*" (John 1:9). Yes, the light of Christ enlightens all, even pagans. He is "*a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles*" (Luke 2:32). He shines even in the darkness of sin, but sinful human darkness, or, rather, people living in the darkness of sin, do not understand Him; they "*did not comprehend it*" (John 1:5). They do not guess that the light in their souls is from Christ, and they think that it is their own natural light. They imagine that they have worked out certain truths and have accomplished certain works thanks to their natural intellect, their own sagacity and judgment. They do not realize that it is only by "*the light [of Christ that they] see light*" (Psalm 35:10). He is the light of every noble science, art, and work.

We have within us spiritual eyes that see a million times better than our physical eyes, which are mere instruments of our spiritual eyes. They are mere channels that allow our soul to reason about, or recognize, all visible objects. What are the objects of contemplation for the spiritual eyes?

Spiritual phenomena. Other than the visible world, there is God, an infinite Spirit, an infinite Mind Who created and continues to create all things in the material world, which is the realization of His thoughts (ideas). There is also a spiritual, angelic world that contemplates the Godhead and all the works of His omnipotence and wisdom. Our spiritual eyes relate above all to the Lord; therefore, their functions are contemplation and meditation on God. This contemplation and meditation on God can extend into infinity, since God Himself is infinite, and it has the potential to cleanse the soul from sin, to perfect it, to bring it nearer and nearer to God, the Source of our light (i.e., our thought and life). The spiritual eyes also contemplate the angelic orders (at least as far as God has revealed them), their spiritual, light-bearing nature, their spiritual goodness, their love for God and each other, their love for mankind, their defense of our earth, its elements, human communities, holy and secular places, and especially all Christians. Moreover, the spiritual eyes turn within to man himself, and then its function is self-examination, self-knowledge, self-introspection, and spiritual watchfulness over our thoughts and desires.

* * *

The Spirit of God dwells in a multitude of Christians and in everyone together with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, and at the same time He is everywhere present—in heaven and on earth. In the same way, Jesus Christ is completely present in every piece of His Body and Blood in all Christian churches, and at the same time He is everywhere present, in heaven and on earth. As God, He is omnipresent, and there is no place where He is not completely present. I take one particle of the Eucharist, He is wholly there; I take another, He is wholly there; but in all of them there is the one and same Christ.

* * *

To deny of any of the three unoriginate Lights in one's thoughts is death to the soul; in this manner God truly shows us that each of the three Persons of the Godhead is our life, "*the life and lives.*"[52] We easily recognize the enemy in this denial of the Persons of the Godhead, in the fire of his falsehood in our heart, in the darkness and constraint arising in our soul.

As by the light of the sun we see the earth, water, and everything found in them, so by the light of the spiritual sun in our heart we see the world of spirits, the angels, and God's saints, the Mother of God, the patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, hierarchs, monastic fathers, and all the saints. We see them with the eyes of our heart (by faith) in the same way as our bodily eyes see the objects of the material world. Thus, a simple, pure heart sees, for instance, the Mother of God with the inner eyes in the same way as the eyes see Her icon or any other visible object.

* * *

The sign of Lord's mercy (or His Mother's), either during prayer or afterward, is peace of heart, especially after we fall into some passion that results in loss of spiritual peace. By this peace of heart and a kind of holy tenderness of heart we can also easily recognize that our prayer has been heard, and that the grace asked in it has been granted to us. The success of the prayer is also recognized by an increase of spiritual strength to help us fulfill the duties of our calling, and by an inner light obviously entering the soul.

* * *

The whole world is but a cobweb compared to the Christian human soul —nothing in it is constant or trustworthy. We cannot lean on anything: everything breaks. We must not cleave to anything with our heart except to the one God, Who has woven this cobweb, and who maintains it and gives it life. If you attach yourself to anything except God, it will wound and constrain the heart. Complete attachment to Him alone gives life.

* * *

What is the essence of a Christian life? It is having nothing in the heart but Christ. If we are blessed with earthly wealth, we must not in the least attach ourselves to them, but instead cling with the whole heart to Christ.

* * *

Though God knows all our needs, prayer is necessary to cleanse and enlighten our soul. It is good to stand in the sunshine: it is warm and pleasant. Likewise, when standing in prayer before God, our spiritual Sun, we are warmed and enlightened.

* * *

We have to wash off our dirt, and prayer washes off our spiritual filth (i.e., sins), especially tearful prayer.

You do not receive from God what you ask Him, because you have not put aside the abomination of idolatry—service of your stomach. You pray to the true God, but you serve the god of your stomach. "*No one can serve two masters*" (Matt 6:24). Stop serving the idol of your stomach, and then you can expect God to answer your petitions. Otherwise, you pray to the true God, but you serve a false god. If you serve the stomach, ask him if he can give you what you ask. Or perhaps your god is the demon of covetousness and therefore the true God, Whom you neglect and forsake, does not heed your prayers. Or perhaps you serve the idol of pride and vanity, and this idol takes possession of your heart as other idols do, and the Lord does not listen to the prayers of an idolatrous heart. "*They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns*" (Jer 2:13). Well, then. Drink the dead, dark water out of these cisterns.

Instead of the tree of life, we are given the Bread of Life; instead of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, we are given Life-giving Bread of Life. In Eden God said, "*Nor shall you touch it, lest you die*" (Gen 3:3). Now He says, "*If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever*" (John 6:51–58). Then Eve and Adam believed the deceiver, and died. Now we believe in the words of the Lord (Matt 26:26, 28; Mark 14:22, 24) and are given new life. As we fell, so we rise again; we fell through disobedience, and we rise through obedience in faith. Then we were in league with the devil against God, in union with him, the prince of lies, resulting in our destruction. Now our whole heart agrees with Truth Itself—God the Saviour, and we unite ourselves to Him with our truthful heart, resulting in life, peace, and joy. "*O fearful mystery! O loving-kindness of God! How is that I, being but dust, partake of the Divine Body and Blood, and am made incorruptible?*"[53]

You only think that you pray, but you have stopped praying long ago. What you call prayer is only useless babble without resonance in your heart. You say the words, but your heart does not feel them; you are deceiving God and yourself. When you pray, you must unfailingly watch over your heart and attend to the words of the prayers, you must feel their truth and power.

* * *

Now we either stand or fall (i.e., in faith and virtue), but we hope for a time and condition when we shall no longer fall, when we shall reach such a state of perfect safety from falls as the angels have attained, who are now inaccessible to evil. We await the time of our establishment in holiness. In the meantime, fight sin and hope that the time of perfect victory over sin and death, its offspring, will finally come. "*The last enemy that will be destroyed is death*" (1 Cor 15:26).

Now even "*a righteous man may fall seven times*" (Prov 24:16), and falling he sighs and says, "O wretched man than I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? With the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin," but the time will come "*when the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin*" (Rom 6:6; 7:23–25), and the law of God alone will dwell in our hearts.

Now we seek lasting happiness, but do not find it. The pleasures that we invent are not lasting; they are false, vain, and transient. But if the Christian walks worthy of his vocation (Eph 4:1), then he shall obtain true, lasting joy as an inheritance. This joy will completely satisfy the needs of his soul.

When we hear a certain person being negatively judged, then we inwardly compare him with ourselves and say in our heart: "I am not like that person; I am perfect compared to him." By justifying ourselves and judging others, we are delighted at our superiority over others. This is Satanic pride; this is the stench of the carnal, sinful man. May such thoughts flee from the soul! We must consider ourselves the worst of all people! Let us sigh when we hear negative assessments of any other people, and instead say to ourselves. "We are worse, a hundred times more sinful than this person," and let us pray with our whole soul for our brother.

* * *

What an honor to my nature: in the small cell where I live (i.e., my heart), I am able to converse with Him Who holds heaven and earth in His right hand, Whom the powers of heaven serve in fear, Him Who is infinite love!

* * *

Because we are flesh, the Lord, so to speak, binds Himself to matter, to visible signs. A few examples. In the Eucharist, He Himself is wholly present in the Body and Blood. In confession, He acts through the visible person of the priest. In baptism, He is present in the water. In chrismation, He acts through the anointing with chrism. In the sacrament of the priesthood, He acts through the bishop. In matrimony, He acts through the priest, Himself crowning the bride and bridegroom. In the sacrament of unction, He heals through the oil. He unites His presence to the church building, to the icons, to the cross, to the sign of the cross, to His name, consisting of separate sounds, to holy water, to consecrated bread, wheat, and wine. But the time will come when His Body and Blood, as well as all other visible signs, will no longer be required for us, for we shall then "*more truly communicate of Him on the day of His kingdom, which has no night,*"[54] but now this is possible only through material things, that is, images and signs.

If I pray to God with heartfelt, living, undoubting faith, then I am not only near Him (as a son living in the same house is to his father), but I am also near to all the heavenly powers, to all the saints reigning in heaven. They are no farther away from me than the icons before which I pray. Therefore, it is an excellent custom to have icons of the Lord, His most-pure Mother, the archangels, guardian angels, and the saints in our homes and to pray before them. Their proximity to our bodily sight indicates their still greater proximity to our spiritual sight, armed with undoubting faith. "*There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents*" (Luke 15:10), just as in the house of the father, brothers rejoice when one of them who had offended his father repents of his offense against his father. This is true intimacy.

It is proper to the One, eternal, Almighty God, Who has life in Himself, to have no need of hope. However, we are creatures whose lifespans are but a day, who have received life and all its benefits from God; we are guilty

creatures who have not fulfilled and do not keep the commandments of the Author of our life; we are creatures who have rebelled against our Creator and Lord, and all we have is hope given as a gift by the Lord in His mercy. He gives hope as a way of restoring life to us who have fallen from life eternal into eternal death. We all know that we carry spiritual death in our very hearts, which gradually kills us physically. Meanwhile, even though our hearts, created for eternal life, have tasted death, they have not been completely struck by it, and still yearn for life and blessedness. This lost blessedness has been restored to us by the Son of God, Jesus Christ, and He is ready to reveal it to those who believe in Him, even in the last days. This hope that we shall obtain the promised blessedness in Christ's name is a Christian hope. During our whole earthly life, for the sake of His Son Who was incarnate for us and took upon Himself all the sins of the world, God cares for our salvation, leads us to it, as though by the hand, by means of His Holy Spirit, Who is the pledge of our inheritance of future blessings. He leads us to salvation through the divine services, sermons, the Word of God, the sacraments, our conscience, and by testing our inner man. Finally, He will lead us into the inherited promised blessings.

* * *

To trust in God means to commit our life, our fate, our entire future to Him alone, and to wait with confidence for the fulfillment of His promises. Hope comes from faith, as a plant from its seed, or a stream from its source. We believe that the Lord is good and merciful, that He loves us as a Father; therefore, He desires every good and true happiness for us. He is most wise and omniscient; consequently, He knows what we need and what is useful for us even better than we do. He is almighty; thus He is always able to give us what He pleases, to fulfill His promises. He is holy and righteous; therefore, all His words are truth. His promises are unchangeable. The highest proof of God's love for man is this: He did not spare His Only-begotten Son, but delivered Him for our sakes to suffering and death. Having strengthened our soul with the thought of our Creator and Provider's boundless mercy, wisdom, omnipotence, and holiness, we can pass through the course of our earthly life without fear or confusion, like a child in its mother's arms, like a ship with a trustworthy anchor. Therefore, "*Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord*"

(Jer 17:7; compare Psalm 2:12; Prov 16:20). “*My God is my helper, and I will trust in Him*” (Psalm 17:3). “*I will not be afraid for ten thousands of the people*” (Psalm 3:7). However, while trusting in God, we must not ourselves be careless and idle. The essence of Christian hope is a constant active aspiration for the Highest Blessing and the Source of all blessings, God, with an insatiable longing to approach Him and receive from Him (and in Him) the kingdom of heaven, prepared before the creation of the world. “*Like as the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so longeth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted for the mighty living God; when shall I come and appear before God’s face?”* (Psalm 42:1–3).

We are invited to join the company of the cherubim, seraphim, thrones, dominions, angels, and archangels, to take the places of the proud, fallen spirits. They grew proud and said within themselves to God: How will You compensate for our loss, which is unbearable to You, since You are the Most-wise Who wants no disharmony in Your world? And the Lord, in answer to this, and to the humiliation of the devil, was pleased to create man out of the earth, and to replenish the loss in the angelic world, caused by the fall of the proud spirits, by earthly beings. This infinite shame is the infinite punishment of the proud spirits; therefore, they employ all their infernal powers to the destruction of man. To show His great love and to further shame the devil, the Lord assumed the earthly body of man to rescue him from the power of the devil.

* * *

When you are very young, or when you lead a sinful, worldly life, you are only aware of Christ the Saviour and the enemy of God and mankind, most evil Satan, and you think that Christ is very far away from you, somewhere in heaven, and that there is a devil somewhere, but not in any way near and around you, and though you hear that he is evil, you think his wickedness does not concern you. However, when you grow older and begin a life of asceticism, when you serve God with a pure conscience, then you will experience in your heart the difference between the easy yoke of the Saviour and the heavy burden of Satan, who pitilessly does us harm.

* * *

The devil plays an important role in human sinfulness. This is why, in the prayers before confession, sinners are leniently judged for their sins because they were tempted by the devil. Therefore, let no one consider himself cast away, even if he is a great sinner, for the devil takes the greater share of the blame. Immediately call Jesus Christ to mind, and turn to Him for forgiveness of your sins. He is "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29). This is why He is the Lamb of God: to take our sins upon Himself and cleanse us of them.

Between God and myself, between my neighbor and myself, there often stands a dark, evil power. I truly, logically know this from experience.

* * *

The devil is able to do much with very little. Therefore, O Christian, be strong and believe in Christ with your whole heart, for you will surely be the prey of the devil if you are heedless and slothful. The devil uses all his strength to prevent your believing in Christ with your heart. It will be terrible for you when you lose your faith!

Strive to become as simple as a child in your interaction with others and in your prayer to God. Simplicity is the greatest good and highest dignity for a person. God Himself is perfectly simple, for He is perfectly spiritual and perfectly good. Do not let your soul become divided between attachment to good and evil.

The love of our Divine Saviour, Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the Holy Spirit for us is so great, so immeasurable, that all dislike, enmity, and hatred against us become insignificant in comparison and seem to vanish entirely. It is because of this boundlessness of God's love for us and the insignificance of human enmity that the Saviour commanded us all to love our enemies, bless them that curse us, do good to them that hate us, and pray for them which despitefully use and persecute us (Matt 5:44). We are in the love of God; what does it matter if men are not well disposed toward us? What can they do to us when God has so loved us?

In the Church of God, the simple, believing souls are as in the house of the Heavenly Father: they feel so free and unburdened here. Here true Christians have a foretaste of the future kingdom, prepared for them from the foundation of the world (Matt 25:34), of future freedom from every sin and death, and of future peace and blessedness. When do they especially

have a foretaste of this? When they turn sincerely with their soul to God, when they pray fervently to God, when they take the firm resolution to devote their lives to God, and when they do deeds of virtue outside the church.

Christian hope is our hope for life in Christ. We were created for life, but we have fallen from life into spiritual and bodily death. But for Christ, we should have been lost forever, though we could not in any case have been altogether destroyed. God is true to Himself. Having created Godlike, eternal spirits, He is true to His eternity in them, and to destroy them altogether would be to renounce His eternity. On the other hand, he cannot receive fallen, sinful, unclean beings into union with Himself, otherwise He would be obliged to disown His holiness and His immutability. Therefore, may the firm love of God the Father for us be forever glorified. For the redemption and cleansing of us sinners, He did not spare His Only-begotten Son, Who gave Himself up to death for us, not only that He might sanctify and cleanse us from every impurity, but also that He might present us to Himself a glorious Church "*not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish*" (Eph 5:27). "*Because I live, you will live also*" (John 14:19). All our hope is founded in Him and upon Him. Because I live, says the Lord, ye shall live also, that is, we shall pass from death to life. The whole Gospel confirms our hope in eternal life (e.g., the resurrection of Lazarus, the conversation with Martha and Mary, the words of the Saviour on the occasion of the institution of the Eucharist in the Gospel of St John).

Jesus Christ rose from the dead and came forth from the tomb through the closed doors without breaking the seal. He was born in a similar way of the most-pure Virgin, "*leaving the doors of Her virginity unbroken by His birth.*"[55] In the same way He enters into the souls of believers, through their bodies, passing through them invisibly, always freely. Thus also He enters into the houses of all, and no walls or locks can restrain Him Who is infinite and unlimited.

In the future life, our joy will be increased by the wonder of suddenly seeing the saints and beautiful angels of the Lord, their numberless hosts, their symmetrical ranks, their hierarchical order. We will see all the saints, all the good and simple men of God of all times: the prophets, apostles, and all others. Above all, our joy will be immeasurable because we will contemplate God Himself in His inaccessible light. Our joy will increase

because of our own inner enlightenment and most perfect blessedness, undimmed by any sin, fear, care, or sorrow.

* * *

Christian hope is our hope of union with God in the future life. Even in our present Christian state, all material and spiritual blessings correspond with, and are directed toward, this union, including God's grace in the Church, divine services, the sacraments, our conscience, our inward trial and cleansing by God, prayers, the fruits of prayer, the afflictions and sicknesses that cleanse our hearts. "*Let him … take up his cross*" (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34). Our present union in fervent prayer and in the sacrament of the Holy Communion prepares us for future heavenly union. The gift of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of Christians assures them of this. It is for this reason that union of the heart with anything other than God is strictly forbidden. Therefore, we must "*abstain from fleshly lusts*" (1 Pet 2:11) and every sin.

By venerating the angels, we accept the life-giving faith that there exists another world of reasonable beings, perfectly pure, simple, and bodiless, and that therefore the existence of our soul after death is not only possible, but real and actual. By venerating the saints, we again accustom ourselves to the thought that there is life for us after death, that virtue and holiness are rewarded after death; therefore, if we live virtuously, we too shall be rewarded. We believe that evil is punished, as we see in the Gospel story of the rich man and Lazarus; therefore, we too shall be punished for the evil that we do here. In general, the veneration of the angels and saints does not indicate any polytheism, but is entirely proper to our nature and results in actual spiritual profit.

* * *

To satisfy the requirement of our reason, in the work of God's providence for mankind there must be mediators between men and God from the spiritual world (since men are, so to speak, between the spiritual and material worlds) to guide us to the heavenly kingdom—the angels. There is an astonishing gradualness and order in all the Lord's works. Everywhere in His kingdom the lower is guided by the higher, hence the necessity of guardian angels for Christians redeemed by the Blood of the Lord.

Moreover, the angels themselves are full of love for us, and they rejoice over the conversion of one sinner. Love is active, and the Lord has given perfect freedom to their noble and useful activity, as we see from Holy Scripture. Guardian angels are indispensable for men because of the craftiness of the evil spirits. Men themselves do not see them, for men are spiritually weak. Therefore, other than the grace of God, we require a person (or persons) full of this grace, wise, firm by nature, and these are the angels. Moreover, after man departs this life, there must be witnesses of his deeds against the demons.

* * *

From our own experience of living, heartfelt prayer, we know that the saints are received into the most intimate union with God. Also, by our own experience we know that, during our communion with God through the prayer of faith, our mind is enlightened in an extraordinary manner and is able to act in an incredibly powerful way. During prayer, it sees that which it does not see in its ordinary state. From this, it follows that the saints, being in union with God, being pure, detached from the body, have the most clear, far-seeing mind. They hear our fervent prayers, and if these prayers are pleasing to God and profitable for us, they will unfailingly fulfill them.

* * *

The presence of a guardian angel near every true Christian is indispensable, because the bodies of Christians, according to the Scriptures, are temples of the Holy Spirit, and Christians themselves are members of the Body of Christ, sanctified by His suffering on the cross and His death, and sealed by the grace of the Holy Spirit in His sacraments, especially when partaking of the very Blood and Body of Christ in the sacrament of Holy Communion. The dignity of a Christian, as a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit, absolutely requires the presence near him of a guardian angel, like an elder brother and friend, who guides him to the Master of all in the kingdom of light and joy. Since there is "*more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents*" (Luke 15:7, 10), we can understand what an important role the angels of the Lord play in our salvation.

Remember that during prayer the Lord is in perfect harmony with us, as our personal Prototype, and He answers every word, every movement of

our heart.

* * *

By venerating icons, I venerate the presence of God, Who before the ages has begotten the Son, His living Image, Who gave material existence to the infinite thought of God the Father by creating the worlds and all creatures that were in the thought of God, including man, created in the image and likeness of God. I also venerate in icons the image of God incarnate, Finally, I venerate myself in them, the image of the immortal, god-like man, called to be a partaker of the divine nature, called to union with the Lord, called to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. Also, I am involuntarily inspired to venerate icons because I see the power of God manifested in them, saving the faithful and punishing unbelievers, in the same way as I see and feel this same power in the sign of the Lord's Cross, which is called life-giving because of its miraculous power. For all these reasons, icons have the same significance for me as the persons whose names they bear. The images of the saints represent to us our spiritual intimacy with God's saints, who all live in God and are always near us in the Holy Spirit, through our heartfelt faith and prayer. For what can be distant from the Spirit of God, Who is everywhere present and fillest all things, "*And penetrating all spirits that are rational, pure, and most subtle*" (Wis 7:23). "*There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents*" (Luke 15:10). This means that the disposition of our souls is evident not only to God, but also to the angels. "*Standing before Thee and before Thy terrible and holy angels, I bring before Thee my evil and wicked doings, and confess them and reveal them.*"[56]

You who pray! "*Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also?*" (Isa 7:13). Is it not enough for you to see weakness in men? Do you wish to see weakness in God Himself, and secretly think that God cannot fulfill your petition? Many things are difficult and many quite impossible to men, but how can you consider anything difficult for God? Indeed, can anything be difficult or impossible to Him? All things are possible and easy to Him. "*For with God all things are possible*" (Mark 10:27). Thus, when you pray, be firmly convinced that for the Lord everything is easy, that He can do everything in a moment. Do not ascribe to God your own impotence, your own inability to help yourself or your

neighbor in any way. For you, a weak, insignificant creature, nearly everything is difficult—you have experienced this a thousand times, but though "it [is] a small thing for you to weary men, … will ye weary my God also?" In other words, is it not enough for you to ascribe difficulty and weakness to men? Must you ascribe similar difficulties to the Lord also, to the Lord Who has created everything by His thought and word? Remember that for Him nothing is difficult. Ask Him boldly for everything; hope to receive everything from Him. "*And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive*" (Matt 21:22).

The holy angels and other heavenly powers are full of pure, holy life, unbroken peace; unfading energy, eternal courage and strength; indescribable beauty, light, and wisdom; the purest love for God and man, mutual friendship, Divine light, and enlightenment. This applies also to our holy guardian angel. What a wonderful nature the angels have! But Christians who become worthy of attaining to the future life and to the resurrection from the dead will be equal to the angels, according to the Word of the Lord Himself. Let us, then, zealously strive after that endless, unchangeable, peaceful life.

Christian! You are to be united with the angels, archangels, all the heavenly powers. Imitate the angels; despise earthly things; love that which is heavenly, eternal, spiritual; shun worldly passions; do not serve the stomach or the demon of covetousness; be gentle, meek, calm as an angel, pure as an angel, simple and holy as an angel.

Contemplate in man his Divine origin, the soul, which is created in the image and likeness of God, and for the sake of this origin always respect and love man with your whole heart, without guile.

* * *

It is quite an ordinary matter for a word to become incarnate. We speak using disconnected sounds—what else is this but an incarnation of the word? We write letters on paper—is not this also an incarnation of the word?

* * *

What is faith? It is conviction in spiritual truth, in Him Who Is, God. It is conviction in the existence of the spiritual world with all its qualities, strong

as the knowledge of the existence of the material world with all that pertains to it. To have faith means to be as sure of the reality of the spiritual world as we are of the existence of the material world. For example, I am completely sure that God is eternal, all-good, all-wise, and almighty, and I do not for a moment think that He is not eternal, not all-good, not all-wise, not almighty. Therefore, I believe firmly and without doubt. I believe further that the Lord, being Mercy Itself, shall give everything that we ask of Him, and I do not in the least doubt this. Therefore, I have faith.

* * *

The name of God is God Himself. Therefore "*you shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain*" (Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11), or "*the Name of the God of Jacob defend thee*" (Psalm 19:2), or again, "*Bring my soul out of prison, that I may give thanks unto Thy name*" (Psalm 141:8). Since the Lord is the most simple Being, the most simple Spirit, He is totally present even in a single word, a single thought, being at the same time everywhere present in all His creatures. This is why, if you only call upon the name of the Lord, you call upon the Lord Himself, the Saviour of those who believe, and you shall be saved. "*Whosoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Acts 2:21). "*He is their defender in time of trouble, and the Lord shall help them, and deliver them*" (Psalm 36:22 [TAU]).

The whole man, soul and body, is called by a single name or word—for instance, John—to indicate that he is brought into existence by the Word of God, Who is simple. A person's name also indicates that the soul is likewise a simple being. A single name conceals such a wealth and depth of the human spirit, such a multitude of divisible parts of matter. Man is truly the image and likeness of God, and at the same time he is a microcosm.

* * *

The soul of a person is present in his name. For instance, the soul of John is present in the name "John." Thus, when someone calls me by name, my soul recognizes itself in the name, and answers to it. Thus, in the name of Jesus Christ, Christ Himself is completely present, His Soul and Body, united to the Godhead.

* * *

God is an infinite Spirit. In what ways is God infinite? He is infinite life and wisdom; mercy and love; omnipotence; righteousness and holiness. He is infinite in His presence in all reasonable, spiritual, or irrational creatures, as well as in all material creation. God is everywhere, present in all things, not contained by any creature. No single thought, however rapid and bold it may be, can in any way exceed Him, but ever moves in Him only.

* * *

The Hebrews ate the flesh of the sacrificed animals. This was an image of our spiritual food. Now we eat the Most-pure Body and Blood of the Lord throughout the whole earth, not the bodies of sacrificed animals. Therefore, he who frequently communes of the Holy Mysteries should not need to eat the flesh of animals. Why should I need animal flesh when I partake of the Most-pure Body and the Most-pure Blood, the life-giving Mysteries of my God? Do they not contain sufficient life, peace, joy, spiritual, and bodily strength for me? Can I not be satisfied with only vegetables and fish, which are much lighter for me?

* * *

Why do you think it strange that the Lord offers you His Body and Blood as food and drink? He Who gave you the flesh of the animals He created to eat has finally given you Himself as food and drink. He who fed you at your mother’s breasts now feeds you with His own Body and Blood, so that like your mother’s milk (through which you absorbed some of her qualities, her spirit, so to speak) you may absorb, together with the Body and Blood of Christ the Saviour, His spirit and life. Or as previously, in your infancy, you were fed by your mother and lived by her—by her milk—so now, having grown up and become a sinful man, you are fed with the Blood of your Life-giver, so that through this you may live and spiritually grow into a man of God, a holy man. In short, you were then your mother’s son, but now you can become God’s own child, brought up and fed with His Body and Blood and, above all, with His Spirit (for His Body and Blood are spirit and life [John 6:63]). In this way, you can become an heir of the heavenly kingdom, for which reason you were created, and for which reason you live.

Children! Remember that Jesus Christ so loves you that He calls you several times every year[57] to His Divine and life-giving table, at which He

gives you His own Divine, Most-pure Body as food and His Divine, Most-pure, Life-giving Blood as drink, so that you should live not only here temporarily, but also in heaven eternally. Therefore, be very, very thankful to your Creator and Saviour for His immeasurable love for you, your parents, your brothers and sisters, and all mankind.

Christian hope is our hope in Christ and in the eternal blessedness promised us by Christ. He is the summit of our desires: "*He will save His people from their sins*" (Matt 1:21). Many Christians say, "I should like to go to Paradise, but my sins will not let me," but those who speak thus have no idea of Christian hope: they consider their sins to be a kind of indestructible wall. No! I say that our Saviour, Jesus Christ, has destroyed this very wall by His cross and death, and has opened God's Paradise to all those who repent. Let us stand firmly in this conviction, in order to teach how to trust in Christ, for not every hope is the Christian, true, and saving hope. I will point out the uniqueness of Christian hope, its soundness, firmness, and fullness, as well as the signs by which we may know whether we have Christian hope. Christian hope breathes with prayer as by air, it is maintained and strengthened by the Life-giving Mysteries, by reading and listening to the Word of God, by the writings of the Holy Fathers, and by the good works of each one of us. Here we will mention that since the Christian is a free and reasonable being, created in the image and likeness of God, but having fallen (of his own will) or withdrawn from God by his sins, he must draw near to His Prototype through faith, hope, and love. I advise every Christian to consider carefully what qualities refer to the Godlike, immortal man in him. I beseech him to turn his attention to his heart, to heed its requirements, which very often disclose themselves to his consciousness, and to satisfy such requirements without delay. Our heart requires faith in God and union with Him in Whom it finds peace and blessedness, but it is also tempted by the spirit of darkness and by inherited perversion. It is also allured by earthly goods, none of which constitute its peace, life, and blessedness, but only its sorrow and anguish. To unite the heart to Christ through faith and hope—this is my last wish for you in my present sermon on the subject of Christian hope. To destroy trust in earthly blessings, in men, honors, riches, sensual pleasures—this is my sole desire. We sink in sins, and we often despair and perish from their multitude. To turn the attention of all to our Hope, to Christ the Saviour in all sins, in all sorrows, in all the changes of life, both in happiness and in misfortune; to

show that He is the God of those who repent and the Saviour of those who sin—this is my desire. To show that only in Christ is our life, our blessedness, our light, our riches, our meat and drink, our everything; and to teach all to strive after Him during all their life, as the summit of all our desires—this is what I wish above all things. Jesus is the ever-living Source. I desire to lead you in such a way that each one of you should with all his heart call Jesus his Jesus, his Saviour. God forbid that we be those who say, "*Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?*" (John 12:38: Isa 53:1).

The Lord is Truth; everything that He has said is pure truth and does not allow even a shadow of doubt. Therefore, we hope that God will come again to judge the quick and the dead, that there will be a life of the world to come, the joy of the righteous and the torments of sinners.

* * *

Christian hope can be characterized thus: pray and hope, struggle and hope, strive to enter in at the strait gate (Matt 8:13). "*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving*" (Col 4:2).

He who comes to the Holy Cup with any passion in his heart is another Judas who comes to kiss the Son of Man with the kiss of betrayal.

Prayer hopes to receive all things. Thrice-radiant Love, have mercy upon me!

* * *

I do not know how a sensible man can possibly doubt any divinely revealed truth, revealed by Jesus Christ, witnessed by the Apostles, sealed by the blood of the innumerable host of martyrs, preached by the hierarchs and monastic fathers of the Church and by all the saints, and giving life to the heart. And yet there are unfortunate people who waver, actually waver, shaken by some inner doubt, heavy as a stone, gnawing like a viper, destructive as the devil. They are deceived by some unknown, invisible flatterer, some pitiless murderer. What is the reason for this? Why am I myself at times so irrational, foolish, abnormal, and, in addition to all this, gloomy and despondent besides? I know why: "*You will know them by their fruits*" (Matt 7:16). By this terrible condition of my soul I can ascertain the cause; by the traces of the murderer I find the murderer. This is my enemy,

the devil's doing. The murderer! It is he who kills my soul through doubt and unbelief; it is he who torments me. But I myself am also unwise in allowing myself to listen to the doubts suggested by the liar, the murderer, the adversary of God and man. When you observe in yourself any thought antagonistic to God, any doubt in the Trinity and the mutual interrelation of the Person, and so on, believe that the enemy of God and man has entered into you. You have long believed in the Holy, Consubstantial, Life-giving, and Undivided Trinity; you have long enjoyed His mercies, life, peace, and all blessings. Therefore, remain faithful to the Trinity, even until death.

Faith calms and gives joy. Unbelief disturbs and wounds.

* * *

When praying, infuse all your actions with meaning. When you pour oil into the lamp burning before an icon, remember that the Life-giver sustains your life by His Spirit every day, every hour, every minute. Daily he pours into you the sacred oil of life by which your body and soul are sustained: he gives you sleep to sustain your body, and He gives you prayer and the Word of God to sustain the spirit. When you place a candle before an icon, remember that your life is like a burning candle, that it will burn out and be extinguished, or that some other reasons, such as passions, overeating, wine, and other pleasures make it burn faster than it should.

* * *

The ways we confirm and strengthen our Christian hope include prayer, especially frequent, sincere prayer, confession of our sins, frequent reading of the Word of God, and, above all, frequent communion of the Holy Life-giving Mysteries of the Body and Blood of Christ.

* * *

Our guides in Christian hope are the Lord Himself, His Most-pure Mother, all the saints, prophets, apostles, martyrs, hierarchs, and monastic fathers. They all turned to God with the hope of salvation, and not one of them was ashamed. All were saved. "*Hope does not disappoint*" (Rom 5:5), says the Scripture, and it did not make them ashamed.

The way Christian hope is expressed in this earthly life is the forgiveness of the sins in which we live our entire life. “*And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins*” (1 John 2:1–2). As concerns the heavenly life: “*we shall see Him as He is*” (1 John 3:2), … “*Shine forth as the sun*” (Matt 13:43). “*Where I am, there My servant will be also … I go to prepare a place for you*” (John 12:26; 14:2). “*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body*” (Phil 3:20, 21).

Here is another subject for hope. The passions assault your heart and their attack is violent; it is difficult to withstand them and not to succumb to them. But have hope in Christ, and you will conquer them. Say: “*From my youth up many passions have afflicted me; but Thou, my Saviour, Thyself deliver me and save me.”*[58]

Misfortune for a Christian is a lack of Christian hope. He feels constraint in his heart from his sins, the weariness and sorrow of sin, and if he does not have Christian hope in his heart, what does he do? He rushes to use artificial means, sinful distractions, to drive away the sorrow and weariness, not to Christ, Whose “*yoke is easy*” for our heart and Whose “*burden is light*” (Matt 11:30), not to prayer, not to repentance for his sins, not to the Word of God, which “*is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction*” (2 Tim 3:16; Rom 15:4). This is what happens in most cases. Here is the reason why worldly people feel the need to attend theaters and various other amusements. Some even resort to suicide. The experience of obtaining that which we pray for greatly strengthens Christian hope in our heart. And he who is attentive to himself will easily observe this occurring within him.

He who prays should hope to move the Lord to forgive him all his sins: “*I forgave you all that debt, because you begged Me*” (Matt 18:32), “*for there is no sin that can overcome God’s loving kindness.”*[59] “*The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*” (1 John 1:7). “*If anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*” (1 John 2:1).

Hope presupposes the expectation of a blessing that we do not yet possess. “*But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance*” (Rom 8:25). But since our greatest blessing is sinlessness, and we do not possess this blessing, but rather daily suffer from the sins that

have the potential to eternally ruin us, Christian hope should be directed to Christ as the Deliverer from sins and Saviour.

We receive everything necessary for our physical life from earth, fire, and water, and the other elements. We receive everything necessary for our spiritual life—all bright, good, saving thoughts and dispositions of the heart—from God, though we do not notice this because of the invisibility of the thoughts and movements of our heart. "*The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it … So is everyone who is born of the Spirit*" (John 3:8). "*Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God*" (2 Cor 3:5).

When you receive the Holy Life-giving Mysteries, firmly call to mind that Christ Himself is in the bread and wine; mentally inscribe them with the name "Jesus Christ," and with this mental inscription descend with your thoughts into the depths of your heart, and place the Life-giving Guest there. If you receive the Holy Mysteries with such faith, you will see that they will produce the most profound peace of your spiritual powers, and you will feel incredibly light. The Lord showers us with benefits according to the measure of our faith; the Body and Blood become life-giving, burning embers in the believer's heart, as much (or as little) as the heart is prepared. The Church is heaven; the altar is the throne of life, from which God descends into the holy and Most-pure Mysteries to feed and give life to believers. "*Great and marvelous are Your works, Lord God Almighty!*" (Rev 15:3). You prepare us beforehand for the contemplation of the throne and Him Who sits upon it, by seeing the earthly throne in the Church, and by the contemplation, with the eyes of faith, of Him Who sits upon it.

When you ask God for spiritual gifts, such as wisdom, faith, hope, love, meekness and humility, remember that you are the image and likeness of God, that your soul is like the stamp of the divine, and that all the riches of the soul are found in God, as in a treasury (the treasury of blessings), from which we can draw all spiritual blessings through the prayer of faith and patience and by cleansing ourselves from every impurity. Say to the Lord: "*My limited spirit came forth from Your unlimited, most perfect Spirit. Here am I, my Master, bereft of wisdom, understanding, faith, hope, love, meekness, and humility. You see the desire of my heart; therefore, grant me Your great wisdom, 'Faith unashamed, sure hope and love unfeigned.'*"[60]

The Christian's obedience to the Church should begin with perfect trust in her prayers, sacraments, and rites, and it should end in the active

fulfillment of her laws and regulations.

* * *

With your spiritual eyes you clearly see how the Lord keeps you in obedience to Him through your conscience.

* * *

Those who attend the divine services after eating too much voluntarily put on themselves an unnecessary, harmful weight and deaden their hearts to prayer in advance, obstructing the access of holy thoughts and feelings to the heart. We must be most careful not to eat before divine services. We must remember that "*the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking*" (Rom 14:17), that is, that God cannot reign in a heart burdened with overeating and drink.

The Lord is close to every person, especially a Christian who leads such a holy life that his heart and body become the temple of the Holy Spirit. "*Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you?"* (Cor 6:19). Therefore, how easy should it be to pray in every place! The word of the prayer and God to Whom you pray "*is near you, in your mouth and in your heart*" (Rom 10:8).

Sin shuts the eyes of our heart; the thief thinks that God does not see him; the fornicator, as he abandons himself to impure acts, thinks that God does not see him; the miser, the overeater, the drunkard all think that they can hide themselves and their sinful passions. But God sees and judges all. "*I was naked; and I hid myself*" (Gen 3:10). This is what every sinner says with his actions, when he thinks to hide himself from the Omnipresent God.

The Lord's Divine and Life-giving Mysteries are an obvious proof that He sees all things and is always with us. In them, He allows us to touch Him, to thrust our spiritual hands into His side, and to put our fingers into the print of the nails (John 20:25).

How many times have I prayed with faith, and the Lord always heard me and answered my prayers.

* * *

Most of us live with doubt, weak faith, or outright unbelief. “*Having eyes, do you not hear? And having ears, do you not hear? Is your heart still hardened?”* (Mark 8:18,17). We must be careful not to let our hearts become coarse.

Man is the image of God, a living image of the living God. In the soul of a person, especially a believing and virtuous one, the divine, perfect light of God is reflected. “*Be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy*” (1 Pet 1:10; Lev 19:2).

The soul of the first man came from God, as do the souls of all people after Adam: all people are the breath of His Divine Spirit, all should be His children, they should all be as one. “*As You, Father, are in me, and I in You*,” prayed the Saviour to the Heavenly Father, “*that they also may be one in Us*” (John 17:21). See how exalted our origin and destination are! Through Jesus Christ, we should be one with God, and where He is, there we should be also. “*Where I am, there My servant will be also*” (John 12:26). Since our souls are from God, He is very close to us, as intimate as parents with their children. Parents know their children well, but the Lord knows His people, His children by grace in Christ, even more intimately. “*I know My sheep*” (John 10:14).

In the usual human fields of study, once one learns a subject thoroughly, he can easily call it to mind at any point in his life, without losing that knowledge. But in matters of religion and faith, this rarely happens. You think that once you have learned, felt, and touched it, the subject will always remain clear, tangible, and beloved to your soul? This rarely happens. It will a thousand times become dim to you, it will run away from you and will vanish, so that at times you will feel completely indifferent to a subject that used to be your life and breath, and it will sometimes be necessary to clear the way to it with sighs and tears, in order to see it clearly again, to grasp and embrace it with our heart. This occurs because of sin.

* * *

The word, even in our mouths, shows itself to be a creative force, able to form comprehensible ideas out of disparate sounds. Together with the word, the person’s living spirit comes forth, inseparable from thought and word. You see? The word is creative by its very nature, even in us. Why then do we doubt the creative power of the word in prayer, for instance? Why do we

doubt that this service to God with our speech will unfailingly call the mercy of the Lord down on us. The word continually incarnates itself in separate sounds and writings, for are not our books words incarnate? But we have grown so accustomed to this that it does not appear to us worthy of special attention. Not only the divine nature, but also, by His gift, the nature of created animated creatures is inherently creative under God's directing hand: "*Be fruitful and multiply*" (Gen 1:28). The souls of living creatures grow bodies for themselves, under God's direction. Thus people, through the power given them by God, are fruitful and multiply upon the earth; thus people and animals create for themselves everything necessary for their lives, especially people—these most inventive beings who amaze by their infinite creative genius in all spheres of art. As the Word, the Creator Himself, is omnipresent, so His creations are found in many places, though not in infinity, and He creates everywhere, and, if necessary, transforms.

God is such a simple Being that He is quicker than lightning, quicker than thought, and imperceptibly visits our soul. This is why the Lord says, "*The Kingdom of God does not come with observation; … For indeed, the Kingdom of God is within you*" (Luke 17:20, 21). It "is within you," meaning it is impossible to recognize the moment of the coming of the Kingdom of God into our soul. As soon as we have cast out sin from our heart, the Kingdom of God is already within it, and we do not observe when and how this is accomplished. The moment of perfect rejection of sin from the heart is the moment of God's perfect reign within us. Also, the life-giving Mysteries, according to the measure of our faith, instantaneously cleanse, sanctify, and adorn the chamber of the soul. Likewise, the devil and his evil spirits, as simple beings—though far from perfect in their simplicity, and very limited—act on the soul quickly, instantaneously, as suddenly as lightning or thought. A momentary feeling of attachment to earthly things, or a momentary inclination of the heart to sin, a momentary doubt in the truth, and Satan penetrates into the heart, producing in a moment a violent passion in it. Afterward, according to the measure of our sympathy with the passion, he takes possession of us and drags us where he pleases as his prisoners, bound hand and foot. If we resist him, he strives to foil our efforts to strive for heartfelt faith and pious thoughts and feelings by darkening our mind and heart. In order to vanquish and drive him from your heart, you must produce perfect faith in the Lord Jesus Christ in your heart and remember that the enemy is active within you, that your thoughts

or the inclinations of your heart and will are sinful, ungodly. Firmly cast these thoughts out of your heart. Break apart the fetters of sin, so to speak, with all your heart and strength, as Samson did when bound with rope, and by the power of Jesus Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit, you will tear asunder the bonds of hell as though they were nothing but string.

When praying, we must remember that we are members of each other; therefore, we must pray for all, as the Lord's prayer ("Our Father") teaches us. The Apostles and all the saints are examples of this. If we remember this and pray for others, then the holy angels will also pray for us as members of the one Kingdom of Christ, of the one Church, of one body. "*With the measure you use, it will be measured back to you*" (Matt 7:2).

The Lord is my life, my breath, my strength, my light, my peace, my joy, my food and drink. What shall I bring to such a Benefactor, or what shall I recompense Him? I will recompense Him, with His help, by being obedient to His Will, by fulfilling His commandments. "*If you love Me*," says He Himself, "*keep My commandments*" (John 14:15). I will endeavor to please Him by seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and by counting earthly blessings as nothing compared to heavenly ones. I will not let my heart cleave to anything earthly. O, Lord! grant me strength to accomplish this. Strengthen me Yourself with Your right hand. My Strength, do not forsake me! Grant that I may put my trust in You alone, the giver and provider of everything good Who has never forsaken me!

Life is a power that gives life. Therefore God, as the source and cause of life, is infinite Power, giving life to all. This is also why the angels are called the heavenly powers. The human soul is also a power. Angels and men are powers given life by the first Life, borne, guided, and strengthened by the first Power in their reasonable and free service to the first Life. Death is a destructive power. The first power of this kind that appeared in the kingdom of the living God, Who created all things for life, was the devil, and from him the power passed to men and other earthly creatures, "*for the creature was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope*" (Rom 8:20), that is, man, who subjected himself to the first destructive power, the devil. Since the devil is a spiritual power, he acts by the power of his infernal mind on our minds, perverted by his breath at the very beginning, and he separates us from God the Life by sowing doubt and mistrust in God, the Power that is almighty and unchangeable in His attributes. He separates us from God, Who is Love, by the spirit of enmity,

malice, and envy; he separates us from God the Spirit by strongly attaching our heart to earthly good things. We observe that in such sinful, unnatural attachments of our heart there is a power working that is destructive to our soul—the same power present in our anger, doubt, and all sins, in despondency, despair, and in resistance to God's commandments. On the other hand, the Lord God reveals Himself in our soul chiefly as the power of love: "*For love is as strong as death*" (Song of Solomon 8:6). as the power of all virtues, overcoming all obstacles set against the soul by the powers of hell.

During prayer, in front of icons or without them, it is necessary to always have full hope of receiving that which we ask for, such as deliverance from sorrows, spiritual sickness, and sins, because we have already a thousand times experienced that we do obviously obtain mercy from the Lord and Our Lady. Therefore, not to hope to receive that which we request in prayer, or to doubt in our prayers being heard, is the greatest foolishness and blindness.

* * *

If anyone asks you why you pray to inanimate icons, or what is the point of them, answer that we receive incomparably greater benefits from our icons than we do from the kindest and most benevolent living people. Tell him that grace-filled power and help for our souls always comes to us from icons, who deliver us from sins, sorrows, and sicknesses, especially the icons of the Saviour and the Mother of God. That a single glance with faith, as we do to the living and those who are near us, saves us from cruel sorrows, passions, and spiritual darkness. That if the Saviour's garment and the Apostles' robes could restore the sick to health, the images of the Saviour and His Mother have even more power to heal believers of every disease, according to their faith in the Lord and His Mother.

* * *

My soul can conjure millions of mental images of the Mother of God, and my hand can draw as many images of Her as I please, and they will all be worthy of reverence, as She is Herself. Thus, the supernatural and Life-giving Unity has devised, created through the creative Word, and sanctified through the Holy Spirit, the countless multitudes of His reasonable images

—the heavenly powers. Thus, likewise, the Father has devised and the Son, Himself the living image of the Father, has created, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit His own sentient and reasonable image—man. He alone, to our wonder, continues to create images that are all living, beautiful, godlike, lasting, and eternal. Likewise, no matter how many icons I paint, all of them are truly worthy of reverence, and I will undoubtedly venerate them, as long as they correspond to God's real, holy icons (i.e., human beings). What prevents our having as many holy images, for instance, of the Saviour Christ as there are separate Christian individuals? Every image of the Saviour is His image, most worthy of veneration, shining in the soul of every true Christian.

* * *

It is an excellent and God-pleasing custom to have an icon of the Saviour and to pray to Him before it. This is a necessity for our soul. The Lord Himself, with the love proper to His nature, desires to be formed within us, as the Apostle says, "*My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you*" (Gal 4:19). Also: "*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith*" (Eph 3:17). But how can I form Christ in my heart if I do not first call Him to mind sensibly, as though He stood before my eyes? Thus we have images of the Saviour, the Mother of God, and others. Christian love for them, which desires to always bear these images in thought and heart, and our very nature, which is both physical and spiritual, declare the necessity of representing Them on painted icons, placing the icons in the most honored places of the home, as in our hearts or the chambers of our soul, and of venerating them by bowing to them, first spiritually, then bodily. How God pleasing is our veneration of icons! Heaven itself replies to us through the icons, as the Lord in ancient times replied from the mercy seat in the Hebrew tabernacle; many of them even work miracles.

"*Behold, I stand at the door and knock*" (Rev 3:20). This means that the Lord continually stands at the doors of our heart, either closed or in the process of being shut to Him by our sins and various passions. "*Behold, I stand*." You pray, and He stands at your very heart and is attentive to every movement and feeling of your heart.

Lord! Grant me a simple, kind, open, believing, loving, and generous heart, worthy of being Your dwelling place, O Most-gracious One!

* * *

When speaking to any person, I am sure that he hears me, regardless of the distance between us, even if it is considerable, because he answers me, and my words produce the same ideas and inclinations in his heart as in my own. Or when I speak in a numerous assembly, I am sure that the whole assembly hears me at the same time and that, if my words come from the heart, they also fall into the hearts of those who hear me, producing good thoughts and inclinations in them. Similarly, when conversing in prayer with God or the saints, we should be sure, without the slightest doubt, that our words, if uttered with the whole heart, are heard (especially by God, Who is everywhere present, and knows all things, and our very hearts themselves) not only as our words would be heard by living people, but even more easily, due to the simplicity of the spiritual world. The answers to our prayers also come with greater ease, and are wiser and more useful, than earthbound people's answers to our requests, due to the same simplicity and divine enlightenment of the heavenly dwellers. This must be considered as truth requiring no proof, since it is the most ordinary matter. Everyone knows by experience that other people can hear their speech, and the same is true of prayer.

* * *

God and the saints hear our prayer as people hear each other's conversation, or as people standing in church hear the priest's sermon, or as soldiers hear the voice of their commander, with the sole difference that God and the saints hear our prayers incomparably better and more perfectly, because when we hear the words of an ordinary man, we do not know what is in his heart and thoughts, and sometimes a person says one thing, but he thinks another in his heart. But with God and the saints it is not so: they see all that is in our thoughts and in our heart. God sees all by His omniscience, and the saints see us by the grace of the Holy Spirit, in Whom they eternally rest. They see whether our words truly correspond to the feelings of our heart. If they do, and if our heart is a believing, contrite, and humble heart, burning with love, zeal ("*for I fervently flee unto Thee*"[61]), and a desire to

obtain what we ask for, then they are favorably inclined to accept our prayer and grant our petition. God and the saints desire us to call them to mind vividly during prayer, as living beings, present with us. They want us to see them with our spiritual eyes. God is living, "*for He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him*" (Luke 20:38).

Everywhere on the earth, you can see the Artist, the Spirit, rejoicing with complete joy in His creation, revealing His infinite wisdom in the works of His hands. Everywhere we see the Life-giving Spirit, like an artist or a potter, forming many different inanimate and animate vessels. We see especially clearly Him in holy people, since they are His own grand, beautiful temples. But in the unbelieving and impious, we see at almost every step the works of the evil spirit—passions, confusion, enmity, and opposition.

* * *

God is the source of existence and life in everything that exists. This is why He is called "He Who Is," as though He is the only Being in existence, original, uncreated Being, the Source of all being. This is why the Apostle Paul says of Him: "*For in Him we live and move and have our being*" (Acts 17:28). We live in God, we move by His power, we exist by His Will, command, and omnipotence.

You do not understand how the Lord abides in the Holy, life-giving Mysteries? It is a mystery, like the mystery of how the immortal and life-giving Spirit abides in your own body, adorning and strengthening it. The Lord is a simple Being, entirely separate from matter, as simple as a thought or instantaneous movement of our heart or spirit. It is also a mystery, similar to the mystery of how He comes to dwell entirely in your heart without the medium of any matter, but only through a vivid thought of Him, through living faith in Him, or through obedience to His Word. By His most-perfect simplicity, He is necessarily everywhere present: "*Who art everywhere present and fillest all things*"[62]; "*Do not I fill heaven and earth?*" (Jer 23:24). He cannot be divided, though He divides Himself among all and communicates Himself truly and actually in His many gifts, being Himself One and Indivisible, continually creating an infinite and diverse multitude of creatures, being wholly present in every creature, down to the smallest forms of microscopic life.

Air is entirely permeable by sunlight, being transparent, and becomes completely, so to speak, amalgamated with the light, even though the light, because it is so subtle, can always separate itself from the air. Light also penetrates and mixes freely with water, crystal, and glass. A multitude of bodies, capable of reflecting and refracting the rays of light, can become suffused with the light of the sun or the light of fire and can absorb its warmth. On garments embroidered with gold and silver, every bead shines separately with the light of the sun. Likewise, the chosen human race or the souls of the righteous are infused with spiritual Light—God Himself, and they shine forth with His light, being completely amalgamated with Him. Thus, each particle of the life-giving Mysteries, becoming the Body and Blood of the Lord Himself, is all light, brightness, warmth, and life. Not a single, smallest particle remains unchanged into the light and life of the Divinity.

Observe how the Lord is always with you in every place through the image and likeness He had given you. You think by the Father, you speak by the Word, and you act in the Holy Spirit. What air and light are to the body, thought, or God the Father, is to the soul. What food is to the body, the Word is to the soul. What breath and warmth are to the body, the Holy Spirit is to the soul.

* * *

Have you seen how the bees and ants follow their queen? We reasonable beings, endued with speech, should follow God in the same way. Or do you not know that smaller planets follow larger ones, being pulled by their superior force? We reasonable beings, endued with speech, should follow the God of all in the same way. The family is a microcosm of the innumerable family of the powers moving around God and in God. An empire or a king and his subjects are larger images of the heavenly powers moving around the Almighty, the King of Glory.

* * *

During a conversation between people, the air, which is everywhere and fills all things, serves as a medium and conductor between the word of one and the word of another; therefore, it would be impossible to speak and hear without air. The same is true, in a spiritual sense, concerning the Holy

Spirit, "*Who is everywhere present and fillest all things,*"[63] Who is a similar medium for our communication with the bodiless hosts. We do not yet thoroughly understand how air acts as a conductor of our words, so that they can be heard even at a great distance, yet we know that they are heard. In the same way, we do not understand how the holy angels and saints hear, in the Holy Spirit, the sighs of our heart, yet we know that they are heard. In the former case we may be assured of our words having been heard by others judging by their answer, and the same is true in the latter case. In the former, we see the person with whom we converse with our bodily eyes, and in the latter we see the person with whom we converse with the eyes of the heart. The eye sees a physical image, and the spiritual eye sees an invisible person or spirit. For physical beings distance can be a hindrance, but for the Holy Spirit distance does not exist.

Imagine the angel of God as an image of the human soul. In other words, the angel is like your soul. This is why angels appear in human form, because they have a nature similar to the human soul, only sinless, holy, more exalted.

* * *

How speedily God hears the prayer of two or three praying together with the whole heart! "*For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them*" (Matt 18:20), says the Lord Himself.

Our Lord Jesus Christ's intention is to drive away falsehood (flattery), pride, and diabolical malice from our hearts and to implant His truth, love, meekness, and humility in their place.

* * *

If we were to draw the Lord's image on every possible space, we would not be doing too much, because the Lord is truly and completely present in every smallest and largest space. If we saw the Lord everywhere, there would be nothing better, we would only be acting properly, for God is always at our right hand, wherever we may be.

* * *

The Holy Spirit is called the "*Comforter*" (John 14:26) according to His nature, which is peace, joy, and infinite blessedness, and also because of His acting in the souls of believers, whom He comforts like a mother in their virtues; in their sufferings, sorrows, and sicknesses; in their great deeds for the faith. He is also called the Comforter in contrast to the evil spirit of despondency that often attacks our souls. Every phenomenon has its cause. Thus, when you do any good action, you rejoice and find consolation in your soul. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is in you, "*Who is everywhere present and fillest all things, the Treasury of blessings,*"[64] Who comforts us. On the contrary, if you have done anything wrong, or even sometimes when you have done nothing wrong, you feel a heavy despondency in your soul. Why? Because you have allowed the evil spirit of despondency to take possession of you. For example, you begin to pray and you are overcome with despondency, while before you did not feel it during prayer; or perhaps you begin to read a spiritual book (such as the Holy Scriptures) and you are also overpowered with despondency, slothfulness, doubt, weak faith, or even unbelief. Why? Because you are tempted by the evil spirits of despondency, doubt, and unbelief, who are using their wiles against you. Or you are in church, attending divine services, but you feel dull, heavy, and slothful: despondency has fallen on you. Why? Because the evil spirits of slothfulness and despondency are using their wiles against you. Or, again, you begin to write a religious work —a sermon, for instance—and you feel darkness and coldness in your heart, while your body is overcome with weakness. Why? Because the invisible enemies are warring against you. Therefore, the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary to us all in all our good works. He is our power, strength, light, peace, and comfort.

Visible proof of the omnipresence and providence of God is revealed to us in the plant kingdom. Where can we not find things growing on this earth? Plants cover the plains, they scale the inaccessible heights of craggy mountains, they grow in the deserts, they spread their roots in the water and on deserted islands. Who gives it the power to growth and adorns it with beautiful varieties of shapes, colors, and flowers? The Lord God. "God so clothes it." But if God so lovingly clothes the grass, then shall He forsake and forget man, even for a minute? "*Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"* (Matt 6:30; Luke 12:28). If

God at every instant enlivens the grass, and His life does not forsake it, then shall He cease to give life to me? No! If He clothes and gives life to the grass, then in me He dwells continually, as in His temple, if I do not willingly drive Him away by my sins. "*Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* (1 Cor 3:16). Incidentally, a note regarding the temple: Apostle Paul calls the Christian a temple, because the Spirit of God dwells within him. This means that God dwells continually in Christian churches, hence the holiness of the Church, hence our veneration of the Church building. The action of God dwelling in the Church building is perceptible in the hearts of those who turn to Him in prayer.

"*He shall call upon Me, and I will hear him*" (Psalm 90:15). O words most full of love! O words breathing living trust into him who prays!

Hitherto you have not learned to love your neighbor. You answer men's dislike with your own dislike. But do the opposite; answer others' dislike with heartfelt goodwill and love. The more dislike you sense, the more you should force yourself to love. Dislike is a disease, and a sick person should be pitied, should be shown greater care and love, precisely because he is ill. Do you not know that the bodiless enemy uses his wiles against everyone, infecting all with the poison of his hatred? You, too, are not exempt from his craftiness. Do not serve him, then, that spirit of enmity, but serve the God of love with the utmost zeal. Remember that God the Word died for your brothers.

As the rivers flow into the sea, so should souls flow toward God.

Our spiritual and physical lives go their separate ways and do not agree with each other. This is why we sometimes feel well enough physically, but not in spirit. You begin to pray, and you see that your heart has become coarse: "*You grew fat, you grew thick, you are obese! Then he forsook God*" (Deut 32:15). It is difficult for you to pray, though you may be physically well and strong. As soon as you cease praying, you will again feel at ease. But this is a sinful comfort.

"*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Matt 6:21). Know what those who pray in the Church are thinking of. They think of those things to which their hearts are attached.

If our heart doubts in the Life-giving Spirit, there will be no life in us, only sorrow and constraint, and deservedly so, for life comes from the Life-giving Spirit. Sorrow resulting from doubt is a sure sign that this doubt is a lie, proceeding from the murderous devil.

Hitherto I have lived in God: I have thought, felt, and subsisted in Him. In future, I shall also live in Him. I put aside all restless cares, and I trust in my hope, my breath, my Christ.

* * *

He that believes in Christ as he should does not allow himself to doubt even for a moment in the truth of the Lord's words in the Holy Gospel or in the teachings of His pure bride, the Church. It is necessary to acquire such strong faith that it would never, not for a single moment, be shaken by free will, duplicity, or an inclination toward the opposite side. A Christian must never be like a "*wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind*" (James 1:6). Our faith in Christ is "*Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us*" (2 Cor 1:20).

Remember that we are granted eternal salvation by heartfelt and steadfast faith. Remember that the holy Church has not allowed a single one of her true followers to perish, but, by the grace of God, the Church has saved them all. The works of the Saviour and His Church in the faithful speak for themselves. Doubt and unbelief, which kills a person's soul and body, also speak for themselves.

* * *

The Spirit of God is a terrible power, the fear and torment of demons; therefore, the demons, with all their infernal wiles, resist the Spirit of God and blaspheme Him. The Spirit of God is a saving spirit, a spirit of unity, love, and peace; therefore, in every way they oppose the unity, love, and salvation of mankind. They inspired the division of the Church into the Eastern and Western Churches. Observe: this separation came about as a result of the dogma of the Holy Spirit (i.e., the *filioque*). By their efforts, again, the Roman West further separated into Lutheranism, Calvinism, and Anglicanism. Through them, dissent arose in our Orthodox Church. (By the way, should necessary Church reforms be avoided only because of fears of a schism? Some reform is necessary; otherwise, we shall be mocked by the

demons. Is it possible that we are allowing ourselves to be overcome by their evil? God forbid! Therefore, the Bible must be translated into the Russian language. Otherwise, how many millions will be deprived of its riches because Slavonic is not understood by many![65]) Moreover, the demons use all the weapons in their arsenal to uproot faith in the Gospel and in Christ's Church from the hearts of Christians, which is also blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, and they have already partially succeeded in doing so. They also strive in every possible way to incite Christians to carnal sins and impurity, so that the Spirit of God would cease to dwell in them, as was the case with mankind before the Flood. And, indeed, do we not see that men are given over to covetousness, gluttony, drunkenness, and profligacy to an enormous degree? To what perversion have we stooped! It will be terrible for us, and perhaps very soon. The spirits of evil also attack the Holy Spirit in the thoughts and hearts of separate individuals, shaking their faith in Him. How terrible for us! Let us not blaspheme the Life-giving Holy Spirit of God, the Spirit of unspeakable love, Who "*makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*" (Rom 8:26). Let us always remember, during our entire lifetime, to worship and praise Him as we worship the Father and the Son, with undivided and equal honor. Let us also honor our universal Creed, the salvific guide in the faith for believers of all times and places. Let us not offend, even with a single doubting thought, the Spirit of God dwelling in us and vivifying us, this fullness of God, infinitely loving us, as do the Father and the Son.

We "*have been made to drink into one Spirit*" (1 Cor 12:13). From this you see that the Spirit of God surrounds us on all sides, like water or air. "*The Spirit of the Lord fills the world* (Wis 1:7)." "*Faith [is given us] by the Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit*" (1 Cor 12:9), says the Apostle Paul. "*The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit*" (Rom 5:5), says the same Apostle.

How good it is to conquer the passions! After each victory one feels such lightness of heart, such peace and greatness of spirit!

* * *

"*Is not life more than food?"* (Matt 6:25). Immeasurably more, infinitely more. In our soul shines the image of the invisible God, the Creator of all. I

should not begrudge not only nothing material, but not even my soul, my life, for the material, bodily, and especially spiritual profit of my brother. By lovingly serving my brother, I serve God Himself. O! I feel this great and sublime truth in my heart: "*Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me*" (Matt 25:40). Why? Because every man is an image of God, and because Jesus Christ is both God and man, and He is the Head of the Body—His Church. "*We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones*" (Eph 5:30). We are members of Christ.

Do not believe your flesh when it threatens to you with weakness during prayer: it lies. As soon as you begin to pray, you will find that the flesh will become your obedient slave. Your prayer will enliven it also. Always remember that the flesh lies.

* * *

He who believes in the Saviour and eats His Body and Blood has life eternal in himself, and this is the reason why every sin induces painful suffering and confusion in the heart. But those who do not have life eternal within them drink iniquity like water, but they do not suffer because life eternal is not in their hearts.

* * *

Glory to the Spirit of God, descending from the Father to give life to every creature and filling the whole universe. Glory to Him, giving life to angels and men and to every creature. Glory to Him, our Power, our Holiness. Glory to Him, coeternal with the Father and the Son!

* * *

My physical nature requires images. Therefore, it is proper and right to make images and reverence them. What else is man himself but a living image of the living God? The Son of God Himself is a perfect seal of the Father, revealing the Father in Himself. If we are images of God, formed of a soul and body, then why should we not venerate God's saints in their images made with hands? The inscription of the name on the image means much to the believer. The name serves the same purpose for the believer as the soul of the saint. Call upon the name of the saint with your whole soul;

he will hear you and will manifest his miraculous power in the image. The name of the Saviour, invoked with faith, works wonders. It drives away the demons, quenches the fire of the passions, heals sicknesses. The names of saints, invoked with faith, also work wonders by the grace of God. And what is astonishing in this? They are all in the Spirit of God, and the Life-giving Spirit of God is everywhere present and fills all things. The saints all work wonders by the Holy Spirit, because the one Spirit of God is the Spirit of wonders.

* * *

Man is a microcosm. As the soul resides in the body, so God abides in the world. When the soul leaves the body, the body immediately crumbles to pieces. Likewise, when the Spirit of God leaves the world, it will immediately crumble to pieces. The soul is diffused throughout the body, but concentrated especially in the heart, and God is throughout the world, but especially in heaven and in churches. Therefore, recognize the presence of God at your every step.

* * *

Glory to You, All-holy, Life-giving "*Spirit, proceeding from the Father and ever resting in the Son,*"[66] undivided from the Father and the Son! Glory to You, Son of God, Who casts out devils by the Spirit of God (Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20), and orders our salvation, sanctifying, teaching, and strengthening us by the same Spirit! Glory to You, Father, ever condescending to us in the Son by the Holy Spirit! Indivisible Trinity-Unity, have mercy upon us!

Children, being the images of their father and mother, are near to their hearts, but still nearer are the images of God, and especially Christians, to the heart of God. The frequent outward and inward resemblance of children to their parents reminds us of our inward resemblance to God.

* * *

Every place is the place of God's presence and dominion. Therefore, it is undoubtedly true that the Lord looks at us with the eyes of the holy icons as though they were His own, and He can speak to us by the mouths of the

holy icons as though they were His own. Also, since the Lord is in every place, His cross and His name work miracles. His icons often reveal themselves to be wonderworking, and all icons are places of the presence of His grace.

* * *

My thought freely penetrates buildings and their walls, mountains, seas, heaven, and earth. By his thought man is the likeness of the Godhead, Who is an infinite and omnipresent Spirit. Does not God penetrate and fill all things, as the Creator of all?

* * *

Prayer breathes hope, and a prayer without hope is a sinful prayer.

* * *

Does each person have a guardian angel? He has, and must have. The nature of a spirit is extraordinarily active and cannot remain inactive; we see this in our own soul. The nature of a good spirit necessarily seeks activity, the widening of the sphere of its activity, and the spread of the kingdom of truth and good. On the other hand, the nature of an evil spirit also seeks an activity corresponding to it and the spread of the kingdom of falsehood and every evil. We feel in ourselves that the demons try to spread the kingdom of evil any way they can, and the Scripture, too, bears witness of this: "*The devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Pet 5:8). How, then, shall we not admit, according to common sense, that the angels act everywhere throughout the world, striving to spread the kingdom of good and seeking the salvation of mankind? O, how true are the following words: "*Joy [shall be] in heaven over one sinner who repents*" (Luke 15:7). Since there is a devil near every man, there is also an angel near every man! As we clearly feel the presence of the one, so we also feel the presence of the other, although, through self-love, we are in the habit of ascribing all good thoughts, feelings, dispositions, and intentions to ourselves and not to our guardian angel. Would the number of guardian angels be enough for every person to have his own? Enough, and more than enough. When the Apostle Peter attacked the high priest's servant with a

sword to protect His Master and Lord, the Lord said unto Him, "*Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?"* (Matt 26:53). This means that the Lord has more than enough angels to protect every man (Elisha, Jacob), especially to protect the incarnate Son of God. We also know that an angel of God appeared to the Saviour in the garden of Gethsemane to strengthen Him: "*Angels came and ministered to Him*" (Matt 4:11). They also came to Him after the forty days' fast and the temptation in the wilderness. The Infant Saviour's guardian angel appeared to Joseph in sleep and ordered his movements.

Holy Spirit, living, personal, ruling, union of the Father and the Son, have mercy upon me! O Holy Spirit, Giver of Life Who unites all creation, especially reasonable creatures. O power of all creation, have mercy upon me!

* * *

When praying, a man must lay aside all earthly cares and only care for the salvation of his soul.

* * *

We must trust in God during all temptations, during all desolate conditions of the soul. The Lord will deliver us.

* * *

What unity of being there is in the three Persons of the Godhead! The Son does nothing without the Spirit, the Spirit does nothing without the Father, the Father does nothing without the Spirit and the Son, but All act together. This is not how people are. Sometimes we think without the heart's participation, and our deeds are, consequently, without soul. This disharmony is the result of sin. (The three strangers visiting Abraham: two fulfill the will of the third).

* * *

How perfect is God! What infinite fullness of life exists in Him! God the Father begat the creating Word and from Him proceeds the creating Spirit, and they supremely fulfill the will of the Father, as a man's hands do what the mind directs and the heart desires. You are Wonderful, our God, creating all things by Your Hypostatic Word, accomplishing all things by Your Hypostatic Spirit! What fullness of life! Both the Son and the Spirit are equal to the Father, the Source. Both the Son and the Spirit are equally almighty, as the Father and the Son are one mercy and love, one will, one power, one Godhead and kingdom! What fullness of life! The Son is the Creator and the Spirit is the Creator. "*Thy hands*" (the Son and the Spirit) "*have made me and fashioned me*" (Psalm 118:73). What unity! Neither does the Son do anything without the Spirit, nor the Spirit without the Son, but together They accomplish the will of the Father, the Three forming one Being. Therefore, wherever you find the Son acting, there also the Spirit infallibly acts with the Son, as well as the Father, from Whom they derive their source and to Whom They return. "*I glorify the might of the Father and the Son and hymn the power of the Holy Spirit, the undivided, uncreated Godhead, the Consubstantial Trinity, reigning unto ages of ages.*"[67]

O Lord our Saviour, Your greatness is in your giving life to all creatures, since you are the Hypostatic Life, "*that all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father*" (John 5:23). Your greatness, life-giving Holy Spirit, is in Your sanctification and strengthening of all, for you are Life, together with the Father and the Son, and all men shall honor Thee, even as they honor the Father and the Son. For this reason You are also great, O Holy Spirit: the only-begotten Son of God, being consubstantial with You, works miracles and wonders through You, and sanctifies, strengthens, and guides us to His Father through Your grace. "*For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father*" (Eph 2:18).

"*The blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men*" (Matt 12:31). He who denies the hypostatic existence of the Holy Spirit, especially if he himself many times received the grace of the Holy Spirit, blasphemes against Him. Unless he amends, he will not be forgiven either in this world or in the next. O Life-giving Holy Spirit, Spirit of grace, have mercy on us!

Those who pray infrequently are weak in heart; therefore, when they wish to pray, their hearts become feeble, as do their hands, body, and

thoughts, and it is difficult for them to pray. It is necessary to overcome yourself, to strive to pray with the whole heart, for it is a good and joyful thing to pray with the whole heart.

* * *

Hope in the intercession of the Mother of God, the angels, and the saints is a form of Christian hope. They are powerful in their intercession for us, both by the grace of Christ and by their own virtues. We do not pray to Them in vain: through their intercession we trust to obtain mercy, the forgiveness of sins, and salvation, as well as temporal blessings, including physical health, seasonable weather, deliverance from misfortunes and sorrows. Pray in the Spirit and through the Holy Spirit to the Saviour, the Father, the angels, and all the saints, and your prayer will become fervent, and tears will stream from our eyes—sweet, joyful tears. Glory to the Holy Spirit, the Comforter! What a comfort He is to the soul!

* * *

The Saviour and the Comforter, two Persons of the Godhead: the One ever saves from sins, the Other comforts him who is saved. Their very names are taken from Their activity and are always justified in their deeds. He comforts! The Holy Spirit comforts the believing soul as a mother comforts her child.

* * *

By the sovereign power of the Holy Spirit, God changes ordinary bread and wine into the life-giving Body and Blood of His Son. From this we clearly see that He is also the Author and Provider of our physical life, and that our physical life is less important than our spiritual life, because ordinary bread and wine, nourishing and strengthening our bodily nature, are changed into a better bread—the bread of spiritual life, and the wine into spiritual drink.

* * *

The Spirit of God is everywhere. Allow your thought to wander throughout the whole world, and everywhere you will see His works. He enlivens mankind to a higher kind of life. He gives life to animals, birds, fish, and plants. Everywhere, the Body and Blood of the Saviour equally works miracles; everywhere the sacraments have power, and their power is the Holy Spirit.

* * *

On honoring and invoking the saints in prayer (on the day of St Nicholas). The reason: they are in God; they are rich in spiritual gifts; they are in the land of the living, in the land of abundance. On the other hand, we are still in the land of death and of spiritual hunger. God has taken them to Himself to preserve our life. "*God sent me before you to preserve life*" (Gen 45:5), said Joseph to his brethren. Abraham. Noah. The rich man in hell begged Abraham to send Lazarus. Noah was the deliverer from the Flood. Blessed is he "*whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem*" (Isa 31:9 [The text is thus rendered in the Slavonic version]).

I rejoice and delight in the infinite perfection of the Godhead. I rejoice and delight that the Godhead is in three Persons, and that each Person is hypostatically, perfectly God—One in Three. I rejoice that the Father is almighty, the Son is almighty, the Holy Spirit is almighty. The Father is omnipresent, as are the Son and the Holy Spirit; the Father is life, the Son is life, and the Holy Spirit is life; the Father is love, the Son is love, and the Holy Spirit is love. I rejoice in God the Father, I rejoice in God the Son, and I rejoice in God the Holy Spirit—one Godhead, one nature and power, one Saviour, God, Who loves us. I rejoice that each of the three Persons of the Godhead, as God, has unique characteristics: to the Father belong thought and goodwill, to the Son belongs the realization of the Father's thought and goodwill, to the Holy Spirit belong fulfillment, enlivening, and implementation.

* * *

The devil sometimes acts in the mind as a troublesome questioner concerning the incomprehensible, as an audacious invader of the unapproachable mystery of the three Persons of the Trinity and their mutual

relation. It is necessary to approach the mystery of the Trinity with reverence and caution.

* * *

Prayer refreshes and enlivens the soul, like fresh air refreshes the body. When praying, we feel braver and brighter, as we feel physically and spiritually braver and fresher while walking in the fresh air.

* * *

"*All things that the Father has are Mine*" (John 16:15). All things that the Spirit hath are also His, except procession from the father. Speak equally of the Father and the Son, only separating Their Personal attributes. Because they are consubstantial, there is a communion of these attributes.

Learn to pray; force yourself to pray. At first, it will be difficult; but later, the more you force yourself, the easier it will be for you to pray. But in the beginning, it is always necessary to force yourself.

* * *

"O Most-holy Hierarch, Father Nicholas, pray to God for us!" What is the reason that we pray to the saints for ourselves? Do they really pray for us? Is their prayer effective? God Himself plainly declared His will to some sinful men who were not close to Him, that they should ask God's people to pray for them. For example, Abimelech, who took Abraham's wife, was commanded to ask Abraham to pray for him. Job prayed for his friends, according to the evident manifestation of God's will. Moses, Samuel, Elijah, and all the prophets prayed for others. The Lord Himself, in His human nature, prayed to the Heavenly Father for Peter and for all the disciples. The saints are worthy of interceding for our sake before God by their virtues, as those who pleased Him. If mere human fairness requires that a man who is closer to God than others (such as a priest) should pray to God for them, then why should it not be the same in heaven? All the Saints live in God and for us; in God they see our needs, they sympathize with us, they are ready, according to our prayers, to help us. Why does their help depend only on our prayers? To strengthen us in faith and prayer. Moreover,

why do living people wish that those who need their help should ask them for it first?

* * *

In the same way that the devil wounds the soul in an instant by presenting an unlawful desire or unrighteous idea to the heart, God and the guardian angel enliven the soul by an instantaneous flow of holy desires and thoughts. We must be attentive and grateful to the Lord for His spiritual gifts of light.

* * *

What is the significance of the daily invocation of the saints (a different saint each day)? It means that God's saints, our perfect brothers, live and are close to us. They hear us and are always ready to help us by the grace of God. We live together with them in the one house of the Heavenly Father, only in different wings, so to speak. We live in the earthly wing, they live in the heavenly, but we both have a way to communicate with each other. We have the prayer of faith and love, they have a spiritual nature, always ready for active help, because of the love that permeates their souls.

* * *

"*Faith is given to man by the Holy Spirit; therefore no man can say that Jesus is the Lord except by the Holy Spirit*" (1 Cor 12:3). The Holy Spirit was revealed to us by Jesus Christ, Who was conceived and born by the Holy Spirit, Who grew and was strengthened by the Holy Spirit, Who cast out demons by the Holy Spirit, and Who rose from the dead by the Holy Spirit. The apostles, martyrs, hierarchs, and monastic fathers preached the Holy Spirit, and many of them sealed the teaching of the Holy Trinity with their blood.

I am weakness and poverty: God is my strength. This conviction is my highest wisdom, making me blessed.

* * *

When some Christians come to church to pray to God, it would appear they have not one God, but many gods and idols (in this they break the first and second commandments). Some, in their self-love, make idols of themselves: "*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*" (Matt 6:21; Luke 12:34).

As you breathe air in and breathe it out again (i.e., you are always surrounded by air and it permeates you), your soul comes from God and will return again to God, meaning you are always in God and are surrounded on all sides and inwardly filled with Him as with air. This is the meaning of the words "*filled with the Spirit*" (Eph 5:18).

As you breathe air every minute, so every minute you are mentally either with God or the devil in your thoughts, depending on your inner disposition. What air is to the body, the spirit of God is to the soul. As you absorb elements necessary to nourish your body from the air, so likewise you breathe in good inclinations and thoughts from the Holy Spirit.

* * *

I am reading the Gospel: here it is not I who speak, but the Lord Himself. He is present in these words, for He is the Spirit, the Wisdom, the infinite Hypostatic Thought. He is present in these wonderful thoughts and words of the Gospel. Only the word is human; or, rather, even the word belongs to Him, while the thought, its essence and truth, is the very Lord Himself. I see the same in the image of the Saviour or His cross. Again, He Himself is there; the omnipresent Lord is present in them, in this image or in that cross, as He is in the word of the Gospel. His image on the icon or on the cross is only the outward appearance, but the essence is the Lord Himself, Who manifests Himself everywhere, in everything and through everything, and especially in the images and banners that bear His justly worshipped name and image. The same is true of a priest's blessing, in which Christ Himself is present, as though He is the one giving the blessing. This explains the significance of the priestly blessing. Even the sign of the cross we make over ourselves has God's power, if only we make it with faith. Thus, everywhere we can find and sense the Lord.

* * *

"*If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him*" (Luke 17:4; Matt 18:21, 22). As the knower of hearts, the Lord knows that men are liable to very frequently trespass, and that, having fallen, they often rise up again. Therefore He has commanded us to frequently forgive the sins of others, and He Himself is the first to fulfill His holy word. As soon as you say from your whole heart, "I repent," He will immediately forgive you.

* * *

The whole Gospel is the good news of the kingdom to which Christians are predestined. It is one single, unified promise (all the parables, prophecies, and miracles). The epistles of the Apostles reveal these promises of Christian hope in even greater detail.

* * *

"Thy kingdom come," that is, Your complete dominion over our hearts.

* * *

My body is mere earth and ashes, but my soul lives and finds its rest in God alone. He is both the clearness of my thought and the strength of my heart. I myself am nothing.

* * *

The saints fulfilled the Word of the Lord, and the Lord fulfills their petition. They worked for Him; He works for them. The Lord Himself said, "*With the measure you use, it will be measured back to you*" (Matt 7:2). This is why the Lord speedily answers the prayers of the saints on our behalf.

When praying, we must truly sorrow for our sins and sincerely repent of them. When reading the lists of sins in the prayer rule, we must speak them, feeling them in our heart as if they were our own. Also, we must have a fervent desire not to repeat our sin in future.

* * *

Having the intention to speak of Christian hope, I will reveal God's promises to us, as well as the wiles and snares with which the enemy entangles Christians, striving to divert their gaze and trust from their priceless hope. These are the delusion of riches, earthly pleasures, and honors. In speaking of Christian hope, I will reveal the treasury of blessings promised us in Christ, I will show you the incomprehensible, infinite mercy and the innumerable bounties of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Our hope is the Father; our refuge is the Son; our protection is the Holy Spirit. O My God! The infinity of blessings promised to Christians presents itself to my gaze, and at the same time I see the infinite carelessness of Christians toward these promised blessings, their weak faith, even their unbelief and coldness, as they trample underfoot the Blood of the Testament and neglect the mystery of salvation. But may the Lord give me a mouth and wisdom (Luke 21:15), that I may speak with fiery tongues, that with His help I may light the fire of hope in hearts that are cold! O Book of the immutable Testaments! Tell us of God's promises to the righteous and the sinful.

Hope in God after committing sins, whatever they may be, that is, the hope of reconciliation with Him after anger, in despair, sorrow, and passions. It would seem that the hope of a sinner in the forgiveness of his sins and in salvation is nowhere so clearly and powerfully expressed as in the prayers before Holy Communion, in the canons to the Sweetest Lord Jesus, to the Mother of God, to the guardian angel, and in the canons to the saints of the day.

* * *

Hope requires a life corresponding to it. Those who hope must not live "*as others who have no hope*" (1 Thess 4:13). "*Having these promises … let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit*" (2 Cor 7:1). "*Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason of the hope that is in you*" (1 Peter 3:15)—this is what I ask of God.

"*Where I am, there My servant will be also*" (John 12:26) … "*I will grant to sit with Me on My throne*" (Rev 3:21). We "*shall be caught up together with them in the clouds … thus we shall always be with the Lord*" (1 Thess 4:17)—This is our hope!

Take away from each person the thing he loves more than anything else; take money from the miser, take expensive food from the glutton, remove

the advantages expected by the ambitious and proud man, call him by an evil name, and you will see what constitutes the hope of each person, what is his treasure, his passion! O, what shameful passions one sometimes sees! Sometimes a man attaches himself with an impure love to a women, and the passion becomes his breath and his food. What a shameful hope! What a foul heart, fallen away from the Lord! O man who sets his carnal, weak hope in an insignificant creature similar to himself, I will show you Whom you must love! You who burden your hearts by overeating and drunkenness, I will show you Who should fill your hearts! Miser, I will show you where you can acquire silver tried in the fire! You who seek after pleasures and honors, seek the honor of the heavenly calling. You who love fine clothing, seek "*white garments, that you may be clothed, with righteousness*" (Rev 3:18). Despair, despondency, and presumption are sins against hope.

The punishment for sin and the peace of the conscience after repentance vividly prove that there is a Judge, the Life-giver, our God, Who can save or destroy us, Who has given us life and the laws of life, Who chastises us for their violation, Who is unchangeable.

* * *

The holy prophet David calls the soul an eye ("*Mine eye is clouded with anger*" (Psalm 6:8)), hearing, a tongue, a hand, a foot or steps ("*Thou shalt give joy and gladness … the bones that have been humbled will rejoice … my tongue shall rejoice of Thy righteousness*" (Psalm 50:10, 16). "*Suffer not suffer thy feet to slip*" (Psalm 120:3)). The eye of the soul is not closed even at night.

Take me captive, Lord, in the sweet captivity of Your Holy Spirit, so that my words may flow "*as the streams in the south*" (Psalm 125:4) for Your glory and for the salvation of Your people! Grant me this sweet and powerful inner impulse to write down all of these spiritual visions and feelings! Let "*my tongue [be] the pen of a ready writer*" (Psalm 45:1), of the All-holy Spirit!

A deep sense of spiritual poverty, sorrow at the existence of evil, thirst after salvation—all these are to be found in every straightforward and humble soul.

* * *

The ringing of bells is a call for us to speak with God, children with their Father. It is a summons to appear before him.

What do we love most in the world? Life and health. Who is our life and health? Jesus Christ. Therefore, if you wish to live, and to eternally live and be blessed, believe in Jesus Christ, and please Him by living according to His Gospel.

Love is God. If you love God, God dwells in you, and you in God (1 John 4:16). Anger is the devil. The instant you begin to feel angry with your neighbor, the devil is already in you, penetrating you like a needle, and striving to become a mountain inside you, so quickly does he spread, and so heavy is he! Therefore, love God and your neighbor constantly. Do not admit enmity into your heart, even for a single moment, considering it demonic delusion. Amen.

"*Love suffers long and is kind*" (1 Cor 13:4), but malice is impatient, quick to anger, and exacting. Malice is quick to punish, but love is quick to indulge and forgive. Love looks at its own defects and is reluctant to notice them in others, but malice is sharp-sighted to notice the smallest defects in others and is blind to its own great defects. We see the mote in our brother's eye, not the beam in our own. This happens often, very often, notwithstanding God's inner instruction.

Fear hatred as you fear fire; do not admit it into your heart, not for any good reason, and still less for reasons of personal irritation. Hatred is always evil, a child of hell. Sometimes malice enters the heart under the pretense of zeal for the glory of God or the good of our neighbor. Do not believe your zeal in this case; it is false and unwise. Instead, be zealous to extirpate all malice from you. God is glorified by nothing so much as by the "charity that beareth all things," and is dishonored and offended by nothing so much as by malice, under whatever pleasant appearance it may hide itself. It was under the mask of caring for the poor that Judas, hiding his malice against his Lord, sold Him for thirty pieces of silver. Remember that the enemy unceasingly seeks your destruction and attacks you at the time you expect him least. His malice is infinite. Do not bind yourself with the bonds of self-love and sensuality, lest they take you prisoner.

* * *

God is inexhaustible in his gifts to mankind. For the past 7403 years[68] He has abundantly fed all creatures. Everywhere, we see plenty and joy; only the greedy rich seize and hoard too many of God's gifts in their treasuries, gifts that could easily nourish hundreds and thousands of the poor. O Man! Believe firmly in God's inexhaustibility in giving gifts, and willingly "*extend your soul to the hungry*" (Isa 58:10). The more you give, the more God will send you. This is God's law: "*with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you*" (Matt 7: 2).

Learn always to remember and utter the name of God with great faith, reverence, love, and a grateful heart. Never pronounce it frivolously.

* * *

Speak and do everything right without doubting, boldly, firmly, and with conviction. Avoid doubts, timidity, lassitude, and indecision. "*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love*" (2 Tim 1:7; Rom 7:15). Our Lord is the Lord of powers.

Breathe by faith (i.e., conviction in God's truth), by trust in God, and by love for God and your neighbor. And how can you help yourself do this? By unbelief in the durability of everything earthly, by not putting your trust in earthly blessings, such as food, drink, money, riches, and earthly ties, by not caring, by being indifferent, to everything earthly and perishable. Do not let your heart cling to anything, do not attach yourself to anything. "*Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth*" (Col 3:2).

God is love, and I am an image of God. Therefore, I should be all love. God is the most-perfect good, free from the smallest shadow of evil, I am an image of God; therefore, I should also be perfectly good, without a shadow of evil. If the enemy will tempt you with food or drink, say to him, "My food and drink are the Body and Blood of my Lord; they cannot be taken from me." As long as I am a priest, I can commune every week and, for the most part, several times a week. Moreover, if I seek the kingdom of God within me through hoping in Him, my Lord, then all necessary earthly things will be provided, according to the Scripture: "*Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*" (Matt 6:33). My God is faithful. Inculcate these words into your heart deeply through contemplation.

Do not let yourself become angry for any reason; conquer everything with love—all irritation, offenses, all kinds of family quarrels. Know nothing but love. Always sincerely blame yourself, acknowledge yourself as the cause of all unpleasantness. Say this: "It is my fault; I am the sinner." Remember that your neighbor is as weak as you are, and one infirmity is annulled by the other; therefore, it is useless to blame the infirm and sinful if they acknowledge their infirmity. We must blame the devil, who is so powerful in evil.

* * *

The heavenly Father so greatly cares for me, my life, my salvation, that He did not spare His Only-begotten Son, but sent Him into the world to suffer and die, and now He nourishes me with His Body and Blood. Is it possible, then, that He should not care for me in less important things and should deprive me and mine of the necessary means for subsistence? This has not happened until now, and shall never be. "*Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you*" (Matt 6:33). "*The very hairs of your head are all numbered.… Do not fear therefore*" (Matt 10:30, 31).

My life is the infinite Lord, the Almighty; I am completely immersed in this life, "*Who is above all, and through all, and in you all*" (Eph 4:6). I am always before the face of God; I am always in God, and He is in me. Shall I put my trust in food, drink, or money, or in any man? Would I not then be blind? In truth, God is my only hope. He is everything to me.

We must strive to remember more often these words of the Saviour: "*Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will not by any means enter the kingdom of heaven*" (Matt 18:3, 4), as well as these words of the Apostle: "*As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby*" (1 Pet 2:2) to salvation.

Be especially meek and patient in sickness and in other difficult situations, for, spoiled as we are by health, plenty, happiness, and peace, we are particularly apt to become irritable at such times. Happy are those of us who do not passionately attach themselves to anything, for they are not bound by avarice.

* * *

When praying, always remember that you are conversing with God, the Father of mercies and every consolation, Who is unchangeable, never wearied by our requests. You speak with the Father Who is ever infinitely merciful, wise, all-powerful, for Whom, by His infinite mercy, wisdom, and omnipotence, it is as easy always to fulfill your requests as it is for you to think of them and desire them, as easy as it is for you to pronounce the words of these requests, even infinitely easier. Remember this, and never despair during prayer.

* * *

"*My servant Job shall pray for you … Abraham shall pray for thee … Moses … Samuel … Elijah*" (Job 42:8; Gen 20:7,17; Jer 15:1; 1 Kgs 18:36; Psalm 98:6). The prayers of the saints for us are pleasing to the Lord, since they are His faithful servants.

The devil continually slanders God in our hearts, especially God's omnipresence, saying, "God hath forgotten: He hideth away His face." He also slanders God's justice: "*he careth not*" (Psalm 9:25). He even slanders His existence: "*There is no God*" (Psalm 13:1).

God wants us to continually turn to Him in prayer, so that He can draw His children to Himself, even though they have become hardened by sin and have withdrawn themselves from Him. He desires to cleanse us and enfold us in the embrace of His love, to show us that with Him, we are always well. This is how good parents act toward their ill-natured children.

* * *

When you hear that God speaks, then imagine His word as action, either already accomplished, or being accomplished, or about to be accomplished.

* * *

Prayer is living water that quenches the thirst of the soul. When you pray, imagine that God alone stands before you, God in three Persons, and there is nothing other than Him. Imagine that God is in the world as the soul is in your body, though He is infinitely greater than the world and is not limited by it. Your body is small and is completely permeated by your small soul. The world is large, but God is infinitely great, and He fills the whole of

creation with His presence, since He is "*everywhere present, and fillest all things.*"[69]

What is the significance of the appearance of the three strangers to Abraham? It means that the Lord, in three Persons, constantly, as it were, wanders over the earth and watches over everything that is done on it. It means that He Himself comes to visit those servants who are watchful and attentive to themselves and their salvation and who seek Him, remaining with them and conversing with them as with His true friends ("*We will come to him, and make Our home with him*" [John 14:23]). But on the ungodly, He sends fire, as He did to Sodom and Gomorrah.

* * *

The Lord is so merciful that He never disdains our prayer, but mercifully accepts it and corrects its imperfection, provided that we turn to Him sincerely and do not entirely forget Him.

* * *

We preachers have only to assist the action of God in the hearts of men, to seize their inclination for repentance and strengthen it.

* * *

The word of God is the same as God Himself; therefore, believe every word of the Lord without doubt. The word of God is pure action, and your own word should be action; therefore, our words of prayer should be deed and truth, not falsehood, hypocrisy, and flattery. Apply this to your whole life.

* * *

Great is the dignity of man, the image of God. Why is a person with living faith capable of working all kinds of miracles, and of becoming in some respects a god for nature? Because he is the image of God. Because, through faith, he is one spirit with the Lord. Why did God send His Son to be the Saviour of the world, and deliver Him unto death for the sins of men? Because we are the image of God. Why are such unutterable promises

and blessings given to men, which "*eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him*"? (1 Cor 2:9). All because we are the image of God. What respect we should have for each other! What hope should Christians have! Friends of my God! "*Set your mind on things above*"! (Col 3:2.)

"*The Lord turned and looked at Peter … and Peter went out and wept bitterly*" (Luke 22:61, 62). Even now, when the Lord looks upon us, we weep bitterly over our sins. Yes, our tears during prayer mean that the Lord has looked upon us with His gaze that gives life to everything and tests the hearts and reins. Ah! The soul is sometimes entangled and ensnared by sins like a bird in a net! Sometimes, We see no escape from our sins and they torment us; the heart sometimes feels terribly sorrowful because of them, but Jesus looks upon us, and streams of tears flow from our eyes, washing away the tangled knot of evil from our soul. We weep and rejoice that such mercy has been suddenly and unexpectedly sent to us; what warmth we then feel in our heart, what lightness, as though we could fly up to the Lord God Himself! I thank the Lord with all my heart for freely forgiving "*all my sins*"! (Psalm 25:18 [Tzaddi]).

When Jesus Christ distributed food, He first looked up to heaven, gave thanks, blessed it, and only afterward broke the bread and distributed it. The Apostle Paul did the same thing on the ship. So should we also thank God for our food and drink, for all material blessings, but especially for all spiritual blessings.

* * *

The Holy Spirit is the Treasury of all blessings, or spiritual riches. See what wonderful riches are given the souls in which the Holy Spirit abides! What light of knowledge, what fragrance of virtues! The soul of a righteous man is a rich spiritual treasury; such righteous souls included the Apostles Paul, Peter, and John, the hierarchs St John Chrysostom, St Basil the Great, and St Gregory the Theologian. "*A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good*" (Luke 6:45). This is where the true treasure is. It is not what the world values.

If you wish to contemplate Christian hope in all its greatness, read the Church prayers, follow the divine services attentively, especially on

Sundays and feasts. There you will find an infinite wealth of blessings promised to believers.

* * *

The spiritual man is absorbed both with mind and heart in the contemplation of God, and finds in Him a treasure of knowledge and wisdom, of "*righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit*" (Rom 14:17), but the carnal man is engrossed in the adulterous and sinful world, in material nature, not seeing God in it, seeking in the world all sustenance for his earthly, short-sighted intellect, his self-love and pride. But "*Blessed are the pure in heart*" (Matt 5:8). Cleanse your heart, and hope for union with God in the life to come.

When praying, strive above all things for fervor of spirit and genuine, sincere repentance for your sins. Remember the examples of Ananias, Azarias, Mishael, the prophet Daniel (before the appearance of the Archangel), and the wise thief.

* * *

A priest is the servant of God, invested with His authority and power (in the sacrament of confession). The blessing of the priest is the power of the cross.

* * *

With true Christians, prayer is constant, because we constantly sin. Gratitude is constant, because every day, every moment we receive new mercies from God in addition to the countless mercies we already received. Praise is constant, because we see the glory of our God's works in ourselves and in the world, especially the glory of His infinite love for us.

* * *

The Lord is with us in our most sorrowful, devastating moments ("*I am with him in trouble*" [Psalm 90:15]), but we think that God has forsaken us. O, what unspeakable power our God has over our hearts! Even our mothers

cannot entirely draw our hearts to their love, but the Lord draws our hearts to Himself by His Mysteries and prayer.

There is a hope of reward for good deeds: "*Great is your reward in heaven*" (Matt 5:12). "*Let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap*" (Gal 6:9). "*Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness*" (2 Tim 4:8). Let Thy merciful kindness, O Lord, be upon us; like as we do put "*our trust in Thee*" (Psalm 32:22).

Respect yourself as the image of God; remember that this image is spiritual, and be zealous to fulfill God's commandments, which reestablish God's likeness in you. Be most careful not to break the least of God's commandments—this transgression destroys your likeness to God, and increases your likeness to the devil. The more you transgress God's commandments, the more you will become like the devil.

* * *

Learn to subdue your passions by the power of the Lord's name and your will when you are attacked by a fit of self-love, when you feel ready to strike everyone and break everything.

* * *

I have a teacher Who gives me life; every word of His is the word of life and is, therefore, truth. I believe Him in everything, and all that is contrary to His word—either in my thoughts and heart, or in others' conversation—I do not believe, considering it as falsehood and death to my soul.

* * *

The Most-holy Spirit, by the grace of the Father, gives life to the entire earthly creation.

* * *

We see that everything material perishes, beginning with food and clothing. We see that sins corrupt both soul and body. This should revive in us trust in the incorruptible and eternal. You who eat sweet things, you who

are proud of your clothing, houses, riches—what are you doing? You are playing with soap bubbles.

* * *

Everything that breathes, breathes by air and cannot live without it. Similarly, all reasoning, free creatures live by the Holy Spirit and cannot live without Him. "*Every soul is enlivened by the Holy Spirit.*"[70] Recognize that the Holy Spirit has the same relationship to your soul as air does to your body.

At night our soul is free from worldly vanities, and the spiritual world can act on it more freely, freeing it to receive spiritual impressions. If a person is righteous, his thoughts and the inclinations of his heart are good, but if he is an unrepentant sinner, they are vain and evil.

* * *

The wonderworking icon of the Saviour is the Lord Himself. I weep bitterly and, it seems, involuntarily. By the grace abundantly poured upon me from it, I shed streams of tears that cleanse my soul from sins and bring peace and joy to my heart.

* * *

The devil is in the habit of attacking us when we are in straitened circumstances.

* * *

If a certain thought gives life to the heart, then it is true. If it sorrows and kills the heart, then it is a lie. Our Lord is peace and life, and He dwells in our hearts through peace and life.

* * *

Should not the Christian who looks for eternal peace and joy in heaven courageously and joyfully bear all sorrows, difficulties, sicknesses, injustice, suffering, all unpleasantness? Indeed he should. Otherwise, what

would be the meaning of future rest and peace? What peace and rest will there be for him who has already had peace and rest here, without enduring anything? Where would God's righteousness then be? "*We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God*" (Acts 14:22).

This earthly life is a constant expectation of God's call to enter the life to come. We do not belong to ourselves; we are slaves of God, as the Church so properly calls us; and slaves must hourly await their Lord's summons. He will knock, and you must go, "*that they may open to him immediately*" (Luke 12:36). But how do we actually live? We have entirely forgotten that we are the slaves of God; we think that we belong to ourselves, and we order our lives not according to God's commandments, but our own will. We live as we like. Therefore, our life is full of countless sins. Look at human life, and you will see that it is full of "*vanity of vanities, all is vanity*" (Eccl 1:2): fashions, theaters, card-playing, dancing parties, masquerades, luxurious furniture, albums, and so on. Everything for ourselves, nothing for our neighbor. He may as well go naked or die from hunger and cold.

Contempt for creation concerns the Creator directly; therefore, do not dare to speak the following words or any similar to them: "I dislike that man's face, though he may, perhaps, be a good man," for this is diabolical hatred of God's creature, even blasphemy. Remember that every man is an image of God, and that all his glory is within him, in his heart. Only man looks at the face. God looks at the heart.

* * *

Remember more often that evil is in you, not in other people. With such a conviction, which is the entire truth, you will protect yourself from many sins and passions. Our greatest misfortune lies in the fact that we ascribe our own evil to others.

* * *

God's saints are great merchants, who have enriched themselves with all spiritual treasures, with all virtues: meekness, humility, abstinence, patience, faith, hope, and love. This is why we ask their holy prayers, as poor men beg alms from the rich, that they may help us in our spiritual poverty, that they may teach us how to pray and progress in all Christian

virtues, that they, having boldness before God, may pray for the remission of our past sins and protect us from new ones. We go to the shops of earthly merchants to buy their merchandise. Shall we not rush to these heavenly merchants with fervent prayer, as though with silver and gold? Shall we not purchase their intercession for us before God for the forgiveness of our sins and the acquiring of various Christian virtues? It seems very natural to do so.

* * *

Why is it necessary to thank God and good, charitable people for everything? Chiefly for our own profit, to make the feelings of our soul gentler and more subtle, to cultivate the sense of our complete dependence on God and good men, to cultivate grateful love toward them, as well as the feeling of our own nothingness without God and the sense of our inability to get by without the help of kind people.

* * *

When reprimanding your subordinates for their faults, carefully restrain yourself from anger, irritation, and inner confusion. Be meek, full of love, moderate, and calm. If the subordinate you have to correct takes offense, gently say that you have no intention of offending or irritating him, that you sincerely wish him well, but that he should be orderly in his work. You are not annoyed with him personally, but with the disorder that he causes. Do not offend his pride and dignity by exalting yourself and lowering him in his own estimation. If you have this weakness (pride) yourself, it is better to stop correcting your subordinate and to first cure yourself: "*First remove the plank from you own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye*" (Matt 7:5). Otherwise, you will only irritate your brother and do him no moral good. Be gentle and compassionate to others when you hear of their faults, remembering that you have your own faults, very serious faults. You reprove another, for instance, for drunkenness; but if you drink yourself, or even if you do not drink, but indulge in sweets with dainties, are gluttonous or overeat, then you sin as much as he does. First stop drinking, and only then will you be able to vilify drunkenness in others. You accuse another of negligence in his service, but

perhaps you yourself are also negligent? “*Physician, heal yourself*” (Luke 4:23).

Do not be angry with anyone for any reason; do not despise anyone for any reason. “*Have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins*” (Pet 4:8).

If someone ignores you or even treats you with disdain, do not be hurt or offended, but say to yourself: “I am worthy of this. Glory to You, my Lord, that You have allowed me, an unworthy one, to be dishonored by men like myself!” On your part, always show love to all, especially your dear ones, sincerely, zealously, with the whole heart, generously, not coldly, languidly, hypocritically, reluctantly, half-heartedly.

* * *

Do not overeat, do not oversleep; work with zeal; pray with your whole heart; be entirely obedient to your parents or superiors; wish everyone well; be satisfied with all; and you will be satisfied with yourself, healthy, and happy.

* * *

The life of a Christian should be continual watchfulness over himself (i.e., his heart), because invisible enemies are ready to devour us at every moment. Every moment they boil with rage against us.

* * *

You who avoid sufferings for your body and sorrows for your soul in this life, you who pamper your flesh and appease your soul—why do you not strive to avoid the eternal fire, a thousand times more terrible than elemental fire? Why do you not strive to avoid eternal sorrows? You poor people, turn around! Truly, that fire will be unbearable.

* * *

Is it only a decoration for your house? Is it only a beautiful piece of furniture, an ornament—that richly-painted icon hanging in your house, since you don’t turn to them with heartfelt faith, love, and reverence proper

to holy things? Ask your heart if it is so. Icons in houses or in the church are not intended for show, but for prayers, for veneration, for instruction. The images of the saints should be our tutors in the faith. Read their lives, engrave them in your heart, and strive to bring your life into conformity with theirs.

* * *

"*Thou shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (Mark 12:31). We should have all things in common. As the sun, air, fire, water, and earth are common to us all, so we should also (in part) share our food and drink, money, books, and all the Lord's gifts, to be available to whoever needs them, for they were given to all. We have nothing belonging to us alone, but everything belongs to God. It is not fair for the rich to keep their excess money in their treasuries when there are so many poor people lacking the basic necessities of life, clothing, and homes. Then again, it is fair for hard work to be rewarded, even in excess, and it is just for the idle to endure poverty and misery. Therefore, if we know that some are poor only through their own idleness and laziness, we should not share our extra wealth with them. "*If anyone will not work," says the Apostle Paul, "neither shall he eat*" (2 Thess 3:10). But we should always hasten to help those suffering from horrifying poverty resulting from old age, exhaustion, sickness, fruitless and badly paid labor, truly difficult conditions of life, a large family, or bad harvests, especially if we are rich. We must be guided by the history of the times of the Apostles, by the example of the Early Church.

With the following words inscribed in your heart: "*All things are possible to him who believes*" (Mark 9:23), strive after everything good and praiseworthy. Whatever good work you intend to do, always have faith. Preserve simplicity of heart, simplicity of faith, hope, love, meekness, humility, and gentleness any way you can. Every good comes from God, and God is every good for us. This is the simplicity of faith, hope, and love.

We should lay down our lives for the Lord and our neighbor and not spare them; instead, we begrudge others food, drink, clothing, dwelling, money, books, and other things, which are nothing more than dust. Our crafty, evil flesh seeks the least excuse for self-love, greed, theft.

* * *

What a beautiful, peaceful, safe thing it is for us to forgive the sins of those who sin against us or offend us! As soon as we forgive, we feel at peace. You were offended? What of it? It is good to insult your old, carnal man, who is self-loving, proud, irritable, envious, lazy, avaricious, who greatly offends God. It is good that he is measured at least some of what he measures to God.

* * *

It is not the sun that shines; it is the Lord Who shines in His incomparable goodness, His unspeakable light. If He has given so much light to the sun, then He has infinitely more in Himself. If He has given so much light to the sun, then in the life to come He will certainly give incomparably more light to the righteous. This sun is nothing compared to the reasoning human soul. Thus, if the material, created light shines so resplendently, how will the original, true, uncreated Light—God Himself—shine? This is an analogy between the material world (beginning with the sun, down to the smallest blade of grass) and the spiritual world.

* * *

When your brother sins against you in any way—for instance, when he speaks evil of you, or slanders you by twisting the meaning of your words, do not be angry with him, but try to find in him those good qualities which undoubtedly exist in every person, and think of them with love, disdain his slander as dirt not worthy of attention, a delusion of the devil. Thus gold prospectors pay no attention to the quantity of sand and dirt in the gold dust, but only look for the grains of gold. Even if there are only a few, they value this small quantity and wash out the useless sand. God acts in a similar manner with us, cleansing us with long-suffering.

* * *

"*He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Cor 5:21). Will you then be ashamed to confess any of your sins, whatever they may be, or to accept the blame for sins that you have not committed? If the Son of God took upon Himself the guilt of sin, though He was sinless, then you, too, must accept blame for

all sins with meekness and love, for you are truly guilty of all sins. If you are accused of sins you did not commit, accept their guilt with humble-mindedness.

Be bold, be resolute in every good work, especially words of kindness, tenderness, sympathy, and even more so in works of compassion and community service. Consider despondency and despair during any good work to be a delusion. Say to yourself, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,*" (Phil 4:13), though indeed I am the greatest of sinners. "*All things are possible to him who believes*" (Mark 9:23).

It is necessary that the following words should be indelibly engraved upon our hearts: "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (Mark 12:31). These words should guide our heart during any interaction with another person, whether he comes to us or we to him, whether we have to do some work for him or give him anything, or simply to converse with him. Bear in your heart the words "love him as yourself," and wage a constant inner warfare to fulfill these life-giving words of our Lord. Force yourself to love, intentionally trouble and disturb the worm of self-love and evil concealed within you, crucify it and conquer it "*in the power of His might*" (Eph 6:10), of our Lord Jesus Christ.

When you pray for the repose of the soul of the departed, force yourself to pray with your whole heart, remembering that to do so is your essential duty, not only that of a priest or clergyman. Imagine how necessary it is for the dead man to rest and how greatly he needs the prayers of the living, being a member of the one body of the Church. Imagine how the demons are trying to seize his soul from the angels, how it trembles, not knowing what its eternal destiny will be. Our prayer of faith and love for the departed carries much weight in the Lord's estimation. Imagine then how much you require rest when you are bound by the fetters of sin, and how fervently, with what sincerity, ardor, and power you then pray to the Lord and His most-pure Mother, and how you rejoice and triumph when, after your fervent prayer, you obtain remission of your sins and peace of heart. Apply all this to the soul of the departed. His soul also needs prayer, your prayer, because it cannot pray any longer for itself. The soul of the departed also requires the rest which you can implore for it through fervent prayer and works of charity done for the sake of that soul, and especially through the bloodless sacrifice offered on its behalf.

* * *

Drunkards, adulterers, gluttons, thieves, agitators, idlers, card-players, theatergoers, dancers, idle talkers, scoffers! Tell me: for what purpose did the Son of God come down from heaven, preach the Gospel of the kingdom, work countless miracles, suffer on the cross, die, rise from the dead, and send the Apostles into the world to preach the kingdom? Tell me, why did He do all this? Was it so you could eat too much, get drunk, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, waste your time, talk idly, play cards, attend theaters, dance, and gossip? O, how dearly will you pay for living contrary to the Gospel if you do not repent and amend!

* * *

God's priests should be especially skillful in the art of overcoming evil with good, since they are immersed in God's law, since they are acquainted with many examples of the goodness of God's saints (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Noah, David, Moses, Samuel, especially the God-man, Jesus Christ Himself, Who is our purest Prototype, the Apostles Peter, Paul, James, John, and others, the proto-martyr Archdeacon Stephen, and others), since they are often strengthened in Holy Communion by the very Source of goodness, our Lord Jesus Christ, and since they teach others how to "*overcome evil with good.*" (Rom 12:21). If a priest has not learned to be meek, humble, and kind, to overcome evil with good, he will be judged more harshly than a layman, for the priest is raised to heaven by God's sacraments and has received great powers for pious living. If, under these circumstances, he does not live piously, he dooms himself to eternal fire through his impenitence, negligence, and incorrigibility. My Lord, forgive me my sins, and teach me to do Thy will. Priests should not be overindulgent with sins and passions where it is necessary to uproot passions and bad habits. They must act boldly and firmly, without fearing the malice of others, in fact despising it entirely, although even on such occasions their actions should be gentle and loving, full of a sincere desire for their brother's amendment. If nothing works to change him, they must not pay attention to his anger and ill-humor, but must do their duty with firmness, without being disturbed by outbursts of anger. Peace with sinners is evil. They twist every observation, every request to suit their own evil;

they only wish to see the evil in everything. Not being able to see the light themselves, they think others are blind as well. Being evil themselves, they do not wish to see any good in others.

When anyone praises you to others out of the kindness of his heart, and they inform you of these praises, do not consider them justly due to you, but ascribe them solely to the kindness of heart of the person who praised you, and pray to God for him, that God may strengthen him in his kindness of heart and in every virtue. However, admit yourself to be the greatest of sinners, not only in humility, but because it is the truth, since you know your evil deeds well enough.

* * *

May the infinite love and mercy of the Lord triumph as a result of our sincere admission and confession of sins, and may the sinful flattery of the devil who teaches us to conceal our sins and not to admit to them be utterly ashamed! May all the snares and bonds of the devil be torn asunder by our repentance, like a cobweb! The devil wants us to hide our sins, so that we can more easily sin in secret. But we will destroy his snares and wiles, we will confess our sins, so that we ourselves and all others may see to what abomination we were abandoning ourselves. By admitting this abomination, we can more easily amend. "Tell," it is said, "all thine iniquities," and do not be silent about them, "*that Thou mightest be justified*" (Psalm 50:6).

* * *

Tell yourself, "I have nothing that belongs to me; all I have is God's." To think you have anything belonging to you is to be deluded by your sinful flesh. "Everything belongs to everyone"—these should be the words of the renewed man. "*Neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common*" (Acts 4:32). My Lord! Yours it is to give me all this.

Brothers! Prepare yourselves for union with God. Give up earthly vanity. Apply yourselves to the great work of self-purification and self-improvement. Love progress in faith and virtue, not the vain progress of this age. Even here on earth we prepare ourselves to see the Artist of all creation, visible and invisible. We will see the Beauty of all in eternity.

* * *

To my pupils. You are my children, for I have begotten you through the Gospel in Jesus Christ. You are my spiritual blood, for my teaching flows through your veins. I have given and continue to give you the milk of the Word, as a mother from her breast. You are my children, and therefore you are always in my heart, and I pray for you. You are my children, because you are my spiritual children. You are my children, because, as a priest, I am truly a father, and you yourselves call me father. "My children!" These words are very displeasing to the devil, who is the cause of enmity, malice, and hypocrisy, but I, with God's help, will not even for a moment obey the devil, and I will not call you anything other than my children, for you are my children by faith, by the Church of God, and by the instruction and fatherly guidance you receive from me. One can only truly call others' children "my children" by the Holy Spirit, by the Spirit of truth and love.

* * *

When you are expecting powerful temptations from the enemy, arm yourself with all the armor of God—faith, hope, and love. Keep in your heart the words, "*All things are possible to him who believes*" (Mark 9:23), and "*abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit*" (Rom 15:13). I do not doubt or despair of anything good, although you, my enemy, try to sow doubt and despair regarding everything good, especially regarding the highest good—love. The God of Love Himself is with me, the God Whose children we all are. Unworthy though I am, I bear the image of the Father. "*They were Yours, and You gave them to Me*" (John 17:6, 9).

To those who do not read the Gospel. Are you pure, holy, and perfect, since you do not read the Gospel and you do not need to look into this mirror? Or is your soul so deformed that you are afraid of seeing your deformity? "*Come unto Him, and be lightened, and your faces shall not be ashamed*" (Psalm 33:5).

Do not be anxious about money. If you really need it, then God will send it to you, as He sent the manna and quails to the Israelites. "*The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereoff; the compass of the world, and they that dwell therein*" (Psalm 23:1). First seek the kingdom of God, the salvation of men, their strengthening in faith, the amendment of their lives. Strengthen

yourself in faith, cleanse your heart, conscientiously fulfill your calling, carefully perform your duties, and everything else, such as money, food, clothing, etc., will be added to you.

O Holy Trinity, our God! Simple Being, Who has created our soul in Your own image, grant that we may have life and peace in You! O Holy Trinity, our Provider and Hope! Grant that we may always trust in You alone and always find life and peace in You alone! You bear us all, like a mother, in Your arms, and You feed us all from Your own hands, like the tenderest mother! You never forget us, and You will never forget us, for You Yourself said: "*Can a woman forget her nursing child? … surely, they may forget, yet I will not forget you*" (Isa 49:15). "*I will contend with him who contends with you*." "*I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Isaiah 49:25; Heb 13:5). Why, then, are we anxious about food? Why are we so greedy? Why do we overeat and delight ourselves with sweet things? Why do we begrudge our neighbor's share? O impiety! O blindness! O filthy self-love! O lack of love for God and our neighbor! For God dwells in the person of our neighbor; therefore, we begrudge God His own gifts. Remember how generously the spirit-bearing Prophet Elisha rewarded the Shunamite woman who received him in her house and entertained him in the simplicity of her heart! He implored God to give her a son, and afterward, when this son died, he raised him from the dead.

Our life is vain; vain, pointless, useless, to no purpose are the days we lose for eternity; we only care about earthly, worldly things, and think too little of eternity. We do not imagine future dread judgment, future torment, or future endless bliss. We all live in a kind of spiritual fog; the flesh and passions have overpowered us, and our spirit is oppressed, crushed, stifled. But "behold! The Bridegroom" of our souls "cometh at midnight, and blessed is that servant whom He shall find watchful; but unworthy is he whom He shall find despairing" because of worldly cares. "*Be vigilant then, my soul, do not be weighed down with sleep, lest thou be given over to death and be shut out from the kingdom. But arise, and cry: 'Holy, holy, holy, art Thou, O God! Through the Theotokos have mercy on us.'*"[71]

Believe that the prayer even of one friend of God, especially a priest who lives a holy life, can work miracles in nature, as did the prayers of the prophets Moses, Elijah, and others. Therefore, live a life pleasing to God, especially you who are priests of God. Be holy, pure, meek, humble, merciful, temperate, hard-working, patient, and your prayer will always

penetrate the heavens, and will be heard and answered. Always pray with your whole heart and, above all, with a pure heart. "*Another angel … was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand*" (Rev 8:3, 4). This incense is given to you as well. The censer with the incense should always remind you of this, of how easily your prayer for yourself and "*for the people's sins*" (Heb 9:7) ascends to God and is accepted by Him.

You glorify God with your words, but you do not glorify Him with your actions. Glorify God above all with your deeds—abstinence, love for work, love, mercy, humility, and patience. Do not doubt any truth. "*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"* (Matt 14:31). Terrible things will come from our doubt and presumption!

The sacrament of unction is spiritual honey, life-giving drink. What a wealth of hope! What prayers! It is the essence of the whole Gospel.

* * *

How little people actually require, and how abundantly the Lord gives His gifts to us so that we can provide our brothers with food and drink! We only give away a ladleful from the river, so to speak, and even this is God's, not ours. And yet we are avaricious and stingy. We begrudge every penny and grow anxious, as though we were threatened with the loss of our life itself. O, what deficient Christians! O, what vain, blind trust in food and drink! O, what evil of the flesh! O, what lack of Christian simplicity!

* * *

"*He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him*" (John 6:56). As the life of a child in the womb depends entirely on her, so the Christian communing of the Body and Blood of Christ dwells in Christ, like an infant in its mother's womb, and lives completely by Christ. "*As the living Father sent Me, … so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me*" (John 6:57). Clear, and obvious. In what, then, do you trust besides your Christ, communicant of God's Mysteries, especially if you are a priest? To what do you cleave? In what else do you seek life? Do you seek life in money, which made Judas hang himself? Is it in food and drink? But your

incorruptible food is the Body of Christ, of which you so often partake. "*For what have I in heaven, and what have I desired upon earth from Thee? For lo, they that go far from Thee … The Lord is my strength … my portion, O God, for ever*" (Psalm 72:25, 26; Psalm 117:14; Psalm 72:26).

The malice of the enemy. The more piously a man lives, the more the devil instigates the enmity of others against him, as was the case with Saul against the pious David. The more holy a person is, the more he will be is blasphemed, as, for instance, the Holy Virgin, Who is more honorable than the cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the seraphim. The devil incites us to exalt ourselves before simple-minded people and to despise the simplicity of their faith and the very objects of their faith and reverent worship.

* * *

The Word of God says, "*do not be drunk with wine*" (Eph 5:18), but you builders of public houses say the opposite: "Get drunk with wine!" You have built thousands of public houses to tempt your brothers. And yet you go to church and pray in your homes. "*They flatter with their tongues. Destroy Thou them, O God; let them perish through their own imaginations; cast them out in the multitude of their ungodliness; for they have rebelled against Thee*" (Psalm 5:10).

The Lord is everything good for me and all that is good in me; I am moral nothingness and mostly made up of evil, as my Lord says: "*for without Me you can do nothing*" (John 15:5). This the Lord says even to saints. But if the Lord is all my good, then He is the same for the saints, for they are also human like me. For instance, the saints pray for us by the grace bestowed on them by God (Rev 5:8; 8:3, 4). Had the Lord not given them grace to pray for us, they could not have done so.

Undoubting faith, undoubting hope, undoubting love. Implant these words in your heart, and manifest them with your life.

* * *

In this world be united with others in mutual love and service to all, and then you will be united not only with the angels and saints, but even God Himself, both here on earth, and especially there in the world to come, when God shall "*be all in all*" (1 Cor 15:28). Strive, O man, every possible

way to attain this union, avoiding any spiritual division resulting from self-love, pride, envy, covetousness, doubt, and weak faith, "*that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You, that they also may be one in Us*" (John 17:21). Union is God; division is the devil. The division of the Churches was the work of the devil; heresies and dissent are the work of the devil.

If you greedily eat and drink too much, then you will be all flesh, but if you fast and pray, then you will be all spirit. "*And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit*" (Eph 5:18; see also 1 Thess 5:6–8). Fast and pray, and you shall accomplish great things. The satiated man is incapable of great works. Have simplicity in faith, and you shall accomplish great things, "*for all things are possible to him who believes*" (Mark 9:23). Be watchful and zealous, and you shall do great things.

If there is "*joy in heaven over one sinner who repents*" (Luke 15:7, 10), then what a joyful time Lent must be for God's good angels, particularly the days set aside for confession and communion—Fridays and Saturdays! How greatly priests contribute to their joy by diligently confessing their spiritual children, like true spiritual fathers! On the other hand, there is no more grievous time for the demons than the season of Lent; therefore, they rage more furiously and attack with special cruelty the priests who help God's people sincerely repent of their sins. They are especially powerful, both in church and at home, in cooling the hearts of pious Christians who are zealous in prayer, fasting, and repentance. What pious priest or layman does not know of the demonic fury attacking them even during the sacrament of confession? The least negligence on the part of the confessing priest, the smallest unrighteous movement of his heart, and the demons enter into his heart with all their demonic ferocity, and they torment him for a long time if he does not immediately drive out these uninvited guests by the most fervent prayer of repentance and living faith.

Moses fasted because of the intemperance of the Israelites. The saints suffer because we pamper ourselves; they fast and deprive themselves because of our intemperance and luxury. Their fervent prayers are for us who are so lazy in prayer. The Lord Jesus Christ fasted for our intemperance. His hands were stretched out on the cross for our hands, which stretch out to the forbidden fruit and everything forbidden by the commandments of God. Our prayers are imputed to those for whom we

pray for their justification, as are our ascetic labors and virtues on behalf of others (such as our prayers and alms for the departed and living). For this reason, the prayers and tears of Blessed Augustine's mother saved him.

* * *

When you are confessing, do not spare yourself, do not hurry, do not grow agitated and angry with your spiritual children who come to you. Say to yourself: It is my pleasure to rigorously confess my spiritual children; they are the sheep of my Lord. By doing this, I offer the most pleasing sacrifice to my Lord Who lay down His life for us, and I reap great benefits for my spiritual children, as well as for myself, because I perform my most important duty with joy and a peaceful conscience.

* * *

Why did the Almighty not create the world at once, but in six days? In order to teach man by His own deeds to do his work gradually, without hurrying, with forethought. If you pray, pray without hurrying; if you read the Gospel (or any book, for that matter), do not read it quickly, but read with attention, trying to discern the truth in the reading. If you are studying, do not hurry to finish your lesson quickly, but penetrate into the subject deeply and reflect over it well. If you are doing any other work, do it without hurrying, with reflection, quietly. Even the world was not created in a moment, but in six days. The Lord shows us an example in everything; let us follow in His footsteps.

* * *

Here are the characteristics of a typical man of this second half of the nineteenth century: self-worship, self-will (autonomy), materialism, and spiritual skepticism (unbelief).

* * *

I promised you an angelic life, Abraham's bosom, radiance like the sun, but you disregarded My promises, the words of My mouth, in which there was never any falsehood.

* * *

Why is it that "*for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of in the Day of Judgment*"? (Matt 12:36). Because every idle word brings harm both to the soul of the man who speaks idly and to those who listen to such idle talk, for it distracts them from God the Word, Who is simple. This is why, during Lent, we ask the Lord that our hearing may not be tempted by idle talk: "*A spirit of idle talk give me not.*"[72]

Bear every sorrow, sickness, weakness, hard work, offense, or unpleasantness with humble submission to God's will, saying, "*Your will be done*" (Matt 6:10; Luke 6:2). Know that God's mercy orders everything for your good. The Lord can easily change all misfortune into happiness and joy.

Physical health and the stomach are the two idols that we worship the most, whom we continually serve to the detriment of our Christian calling. This is especially true with men of our present time, of whom I myself, a great sinner, am one. We neglect reading the Word of God, which is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. We neglect prayer, that sweetest conversation with God; we neglect preaching the Word of God. To walk a great deal for physical health and to improve the appetite, to eat our fill—these are the objects of our desires and aspirations. But because of our frequent walks, our passion for food and drink, you begin to notice you have neglected one thing, you have missed another thing irrevocably, while yet another thing has completely slipped your mind. After all, can we really do any serious work after a delicious lunch or dinner? Even if we would like to work, the stomach, full of food and drink, pulls us aside and complains about the need to sleep, and we begin to snooze over our work. What sort of work is this? Indeed, there is nothing left to do after lunch, but to lie down and rest, and after dinner, having prayed somehow or other (for a full man cannot even pray as he should), we go to bed and sleep until the next morning. What a miserable consequence of an overloaded stomach! In the morning, you prepare a new sacrifice to the idol of our stomach—delicious tea. You get up and pray—of course, not with your whole heart, since you can only eat, drink, walk, read novels, go to theaters, dance at evening parties, dress elegantly with your whole heart—out of habit, carelessly, to keep up appearances, only as a formality, without the essence of true prayer, without faith, without power, without any fervor in your

petitions, praises, and thanks to the Lord God for His uncountable mercies, and then you hurry again to eat and drink. At last, when you have eaten and drunk so much that now, scarcely able to move, you are ready to begin work, if it really is work, and not idleness such as trading in some worldly vanities, reaping a profit of foul language, falsehood, and fraud. Many, many of us waste our present life in this way, our days consumed in vanity (Psalm 77:33), caring little for the one thing needful—the salvation of our soul. Our life is spent mainly in the worship of two flimsy idols—health and the stomach. Another such idol is clothing: many, by worshipping fashion, neglect even their health and stomach, going to the other extreme. Furthermore, people worship money, this great god, the Jupiter of our age. For the sake of this idol, many neglect their health, losing sleepless nights for its sake, swearing falsely for its sake, violating the laws of friendship for its sake, becoming cold to their relatives for its sake, all with the one purpose of accumulating as much money as possible. There are money-lovers who, if it were possible, would turn everything into money and would live by it alone, like Judas Iscariot, who wished to transform into money even the precious ointment that the pious woman who loved her Lord with her whole soul used to anoint His feet, wiping them with her hair. Christian! Care not for your health, stomach, clothing, and money! You must strive to love God and your neighbor, for these are God's two greatest commandments. "*He who aides in love abides in God, and God in him*" (1 John 4:16).

All things are possible to him who believes, because the believer is one spirit with the Lord. If everything is possible to the believer who lives on earth, even if he is not yet perfect, then still more is everything possible for the perfected ones who dwell in heaven in intimate union with God. For the saints, God is everything, so that the saints are truly gods. "*I [God Himself, Whose word is truth] said: Ye are gods*" (Psalm 81:6).

Watch every movement of your heart; consider whether it is pleasing to the Holy Trinity, or whether it is rather the will of your old, passionate man.

* * *

The work of the Lord's hands—the visible and invisible world—is a witness to the existence of the Lord and of His wisdom, mercy, omnipotence. This is why we often hear these words sung in church: "*O*

bless the Lord, all ye works of His, …bless the Lord, O my soul" (Psalm 102:22). How, then, can some deny the Lord, not seeing Him in His works?

Believe and always steadfastly remember that whatever place you visit with the Lord's cross, either for a molieben (service of supplication) or any other reason, the cross always sanctifies the air and all who touch it. Believe also that during all prayers, moliebens, church services, and especially during the Liturgy, the Lord speedily grants His blessings to all those who pray sincerely and pardons them by His divine, kingly mercy, according to your prayer, or the prayer of other priests. "*If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*" (Matt 7:11).

Priests praying on earth for mankind are the sign and evidence of the heavenly Church praying for us in Heaven, and of the Mediator Christ God. The saints are kinder than we think, and come to our help more speedily than we think, according to our prayer.

* * *

We endure heavy sorrows unwillingly, faint-heartedly, complaining and blaming the Lord, not seeing the profit that comes from patiently and submissively enduring them. We do not wish to see that our heart has become coarse and infected by various passions, that it is proud, adulterous, malicious, cunning, and cleaves to earthly things, that it cannot be cleansed, made humble, and become good and submissive to God, expect by enduring heavy sorrows.

* * *

Strengthen me, my God, fortify me, my God, help me, my God! "*Save me now, O Lord! O Lord, make haste*" (Psalm 117:25).

You care for the opinion of men and for human glory? Act decisively to heal this spiritual disease. Think and care only for the glory of God. Consider human dishonor to be worth nothing. When it is necessary to give honor to a poor, uneducated, rough father, mother, relation, friend, or acquaintance before the distinguished and educated men of this world, or when it is necessary to defend truth in an assembly that mocks it, fix your gaze on God alone and His commandments, and stand fast in your respect

for those who are unjustly dishonored, without being afraid or ashamed by anyone present.

* * *

On trusting God's providence. "*Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely, they may forget, yet I will not forget you*" (Isa 44:15), says the Lord. And who could be more gentle and careful than a mother? What woman will forget to feed the children of her womb? But let us even admit that mothers who forsake their children may be found, "but I," says the Lord, "am not like such earthly mothers, and I will neither forget, nor forsake you." How the Lord inspires us by these words to trust and hope that His providence will continually care for us and never forsake any one of us! You are sometimes anxious about what you will eat and drink, and how you will be clothed. You greatly burden your heart if you part grudgingly with your money when it is necessary to give to another, even though you have plenty left. By acting thus, you show that you put your trust and hope in earthly dust. But why are you anxious? Why do you cling to this dust? Cling to the heavenly Father. He will not forget you; He will never forsake you. Let the dust forsake you: you will only feel easier without it, for the more money you have, the greater the quantity of this dust that clings to your heart, the heavier, more sorrowful will your immaterial heart be. There is a saying in the world that money is no hindrance, however much of it we may have. This is simply untrue. It greatly hinders our soul from rising upward or from contemplating our heavenly homeland, and the more money we have, the more it drags our soul to the earth, forcing us to occupy ourselves with various earthly diversions: buildings, rich furniture, expensive clothes, decadent food and drink, thereby depriving our soul of holy zeal and precious time, during which it should be purchasing future bliss for itself.

The human soul dwells in its body as in a miniature version of the world. As in ancient times the Lord punished mankind for its sins using natural forces, and the waters, which previously stood in their appointed places, came out from them and flooded the whole earth, so He also punishes each man for his sins using the natural processes of the body, commanding streams of blood or water (i.e., hemorrhage, dropsy) to rush from their appointed places and to flood the microcosm of the human body. The

Master’s punishment is ready for us at any moment, and our own body and soul conceal within themselves many punishments for those who transgress the commandments of God, the Creator and Judge of all. Thus, God punishes us for our sins through our own selves. Chastisement of this kind includes sorrows and sicknesses. *So they might learn that one is punished by the things by which he sins* (Wis 11:16).

When you pray to the Lord, look inside yourself with the eyes of your heart, gaze into your soul. The Lord is in your thoughts and in the right movements of your heart, as He is also outside you and in every place. “*The Word [the Lord] is near you, in your mouth and in your heart*” (Rom 10:8). He is not in Heaven only, nor in the deep alone.

Idle talk and pointless conversation deprives the heart of faith, fear of God, and love for God. Guests are an open wound for a pious heart. Of course, I refer only to guests who are only capable of pointless conversation. Serious, religious guests are a different matter.

* * *

Satiety drives away faith and the fear of God from the heart. A satiated man does not feel the presence of God in his heart; heartfelt, fervent prayer is far from him.

* * *

You have built yourself a house, or renovated your rooms, with the intention of living more comfortably and spaciously, in a cleaner, lighter, and more cheerful space. You have become rich, or at any rate, well to do: all the surroundings of your life are beautiful and fill your soul with joy. It would seem that it only remains for you to live in peace and rejoice. But no. As soon as you begin to enjoy the fruits of your earthly cares, a hitherto unforeseen source of sorrow reveals itself to your soul, and this sorrow strikes you powerfully, suddenly depriving you of peace of heart and the comfort you so longed for. You cease to be interested in anything; nothing seems to exist for you. You feel overburdened by heavy sorrow and anguish. What does this mean? What malicious, envious power attacks us as soon as we begin to live for our own gratification? Why does our soul begin to grieve at the very moment when, in our opinion, it should rejoice? Listen to me, disciple of Christ. You thought to live on earth in peace and

pleasure, but the earthly path must be a most sorrowful and narrow one. You thought to find calm and pleasure in corruptible things and not in Christ, Who alone is the rest and eternal blessedness of our souls, and the Lord, not desiring us to live here in peace and plenty and forget the one thing needful—the salvation of our soul and our heavenly country, but instead desiring us to seek our rest and blessedness in Him alone, allows the devil, God's enemy and yours, to tempt you, to strike your soul with sorrow and affliction when all your surroundings invite you enjoy your comfort and rest. Thus, you learn by experience that every earthly enjoyment is vanity and vexation of spirit, and that without God, even in the midst of all the comforts of an outwardly happy life, we are poor, miserable creatures. To have Christ in our hearts is to possess a rich, beautiful, bright dwelling-place and every adornment, peace, and comfort. Therefore, bear your sorrow patiently, and memorize with your heart this lesson that the Lord teaches you through your sorrows. Do not grow faint-hearted, and do not despair in God's mercy. "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment… so great is the Lord's mercy… He remembereth that we are but dust. As for man, his days are as the grass; for he flourisheth as a flower of the field. For as soon as the wind goeth over it, it is gone*" (2 Cor 4:17; Psalm 102:11, 14–16). "*But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it*" (1 Cor 10:13).

Sincerely believe that everything touched by the Life-giving Spirit of God, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, can be enlivened and imbued with spirit (earth, wheat, bread, wood, and stone). Thus, He transforms the bread and wine into the Most-pure Body and Most-pure Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who ever exists with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Since the Spirit is single, simple, and perfect, He enters a man or anything He pleases in an instant, as fast as a thought, or even faster. There is no atom too small for Him—for Him both the infinitely great and the infinitely small in creation are equally insignificant.

* * *

During the life of a Christian, there are hours of inconsolable sorrow and sickness, when it seems that the Lord has completely abandoned and forsaken him, for there is not the smallest indication of God's presence in

the soul. Such hours are hours when our faith, hope, love, and patience are tested. But better times shall soon come for him, "*and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before*" (Acts 3:20). Soon the Lord will again give joy to him, lest he fall prey to temptation.

During great feasts, our envious enemy, the devil, offends us, grieves us, and depresses us, either with physical illness, which coarsens and stifles the spirit, or with spiritual fiery arrows, or with extreme insensibility and coldness. It will soon become clear to you that the cause of your sorrow or sickness was the enemy's warfare, not a gloomy natural state of mind.

* * *

The more the material prosperity of a pious man increases, the more furiously Satan rages against him and attacks him with temptations (snares), as he did with Job. Therefore, you who love God, when the prosperity of your house increases, you should expect violent attacks from Satan. He will attack one or another member of your family and torment him.

* * *

Do not allow your prayer to be defeated by the flesh or the enemy acting through it. "*Speaketh the truth in his heart, … used no deceit in his tongue*" (Psalm 14:2, 3). Think and feel the words of the prayer, and let there be no honey on your tongue or ice in your heart. Once you are conquered by the enemy, you will have to defend yourself and your freedom against him, as though it were a piece of ground already conquered by the enemy, and your heart will withdraw from the Lord. Neglect nothing in the spiritual life; consider nothing unimportant or unworthy of great attention. Through small sins, the devil leads us to greater ones. Above all, strive to be always truthful in your heart. When it is most difficult to fight the flesh, that is the time to show your firmness, not to weaken in your warfare, like a good soldier of Christ.

When you feel in your heart that the Lord "makes as though He would go further" from your heart, from your thoughts, then constrain Him, the Merciful One, saying sincerely, "*Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day*" of my spiritual life "*is far spent. And He went in to stay with them*" (Luke 24:29), for He is merciful and allows Himself to be constrained.

Do not sit down to eat with a spirit disturbed by passion, lest the enemy turn your food and drink to your harm, and not to your health, for he uses his craft through all things, and always seeks to injure man. Always sit down to eat in peace, thanking the Lord, and the food and drink will be for your benefit and health, because the blessing of God will rest both on the food and on you your self.

* * *

"*Whosoever desires to save his life will lose it*" (Matt 16:25). In other words, whoever wants to save his old, carnal, sinful man will lose his life, for true life is crucifixion and mortification of the old man, together with his deeds, and putting on "*the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him*" (Col 3:9, 10). Without the mortification of the old, carnal man, there is no true life or eternal blessedness. The more complete and more torturous the mortification of the old man, the more perfect will his renovation and regeneration be, the greater his cleansing, the more perfect his life, and the greater his bliss in the future world. Mortify yourself, and you shall obtain new life. I myself feel that when I am in perfect health and do not mortify my body with ascetic labors, I die in spirit, the kingdom of God is no longer in me, and my flesh and the devil overpower me.

Let no weakness in your heart lead you to ascribe weakness to the omnipotent power of the Lord's Cross, and still less to the Holy, Life-giving Mysteries of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Mysteries are always the same Life-giving Power, for they are Christ Himself, the eternal Power Who creates everything, Who sustains everything, Who enlivens everything. The cross also always bears the power of the Crucified One. It always gives life for the sake of the Life that hung upon it.

* * *

Let all carnal sweetness be bitterness to you; let all carnal loss be gain to you; let all precious things be useless for you; let everything wholesome and nourishing be unwholesome and unhealthy to you, because it can easily become harmful to your soul. Let your only sweetness, your one hope be Christ, Who created all things from nothing.

* * *

O, may we all land safely on the shores of the heavenly country!

* * *

"*They immediately left their nets and followed Him*" (Matt 4:20). The Apostles did not regret leaving their nets for the Lord's sake, even though the nets were perhaps their only property, precious to them because they lived by them. We should also leave behind everything that hinders our following the Lord—all the multifarious nets with which the enemy entangles us in this life. But it is a small matter, for we must follow Christ, just as the Apostles left everything behind and followed Him. Whoever wishes to follow Christ must deny himself and take up his cross (Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23), as did Christ and the Apostles, and follow after Christ our God, following His commandments, not sparing himself in difficult labors for the glory of God and the salvation of his soul. Applying this Gospel account about abandoning the nets to yourself, you should imagine everything earthly, beginning with our body and ending with the smallest thing that occupies our attention, as a net that can easily be torn.

It is impossible not to wonder at the simple-heartedness of the Galilean fishermen, their indifference to earthly benefits, and their absolute obedience to the voice of the Lord. A few words of the Saviour were enough to make them abandon their nets, their only source of money, their greatest treasure, and they followed Him, without thinking why or where they were going. What simplicity of heart! What detachment from earthly blessings! What childlike obedience! How easy is the access of the word of the Divine Messiah to simple hearts! As soon as it is spoken, it is done! There are many such simple people living in poverty and low estate, but there are no such people among the rich. What do we see when the Lord told the rich youth to sell his possessions and follow Him? He followed not the Lord, but his riches. "*He went away sorrowful*" (Matt 19:22).

It is good to put candles before the icons. But it is still better if you bring the fire of your love for God and your neighbor as a sacrifice to God. It is good if you do both. But if you place candles before the icons and have no love for God or your neighbor in your heart, if you are avaricious, if you do not live in peace with others, then your sacrifice to God is in vain.

* * *

Do not be disturbed at the enmity of others, but always triumph over it with the greatness of your spirit. Let it collapse and fall down before you in the dust, not you before it. Any evil is in itself a fall, but virtue, even if it is mocked, always stands on a height provided it does not fall through being conquered by evil.

* * *

When there is any unpleasant or unhealthy odor in the air, we hurry to get away from that place, or try to somehow destroy the unhealthy elements that have befouled the pure air. Similarly, when you feel anything disturbing or oppressing your heart, immediately try to drive away the harmful element disturbing your soul (the passions, for instance) knowing that it comes from the abyss of hell. There are many similarities between our physical and spiritual lives, and the wise Christian's spiritual sense is as refined as the carnal man's physical senses. Moreover, it is absurd to sharpen our bodily senses in every way possible, but to leave our spiritual senses neglected. The spiritual senses are concentrated in the heart. It is necessary to refine and purify the heart any way possible, so that it will turn away from the smallest evil odor of sins and passions, and instantly banish them from itself.

* * *

Do not be afraid if you become the subject of rumors or jests. This is diabolical fear. Think only of what the Lord God says about you, what the angels and saints say about you.

* * *

When interacting and conversing with other people, keep in your heart the command, "love them," and, being attentive to it, speak to everyone you meet with heartfelt love and goodwill. Never let this precious word out of your heart in your interactions with others; it powerfully strengthens your heart in love. Of course, it is necessary to bear this word in your heart not

separately, not by itself, but together with sincere faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

* * *

O sinner, you who have fallen into the depths of evil, when you call to mind the multitude of your sins and fall into despair and hardness of heart, remember that the heavenly Father sent His Only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, into the world to save you from sins and eternal condemnation. Turn then with faith to this Mediator between God and man, imploring Him from the depths of your soul to wash away your iniquities by His all-cleansing Blood, shed for us on the cross. Turn zealously to repentance, confessing your sins before His priest as before Himself, that you may be justified, after which, if the minister of the sacrament of penitence finds you prepared and ready, draw nigh to the holy cup, and you will be cleansed of your sins. Peace will flow into your soul like a river, and you will be the Heavenly Father's son, who "*was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found*" (Luke 15:24, 32).

Do not be irritated with him who holds grudges against you and repeatedly wounds you by finding fault with you, but be compassionate to him and love him, saying: It is not he or she that is so full of malice against me, but it is the devil who rages against me through them, and they themselves, poor creatures, are only tempted by him. As soon as this temptation ceases, they will be kind again. We are all often worthy of pity as the instruments of the bodiless enemy. We must pity mankind, so violently persecuted by the enemy.

* * *

There is sometimes such stony insensibility in the soul that you do not see or feel your sins. You do not fear death, the Judge, or the dread judgment seat. You do not care two straws for anything spiritual, as the saying goes. O cunning, proud, evil flesh! It is not without reason that even the saints complain: "I am overcome by the slumber of sloth, and the sleep of sin oppresses my heart. Avail thyself, my soul, of the time for repentance; shake off the heavy sleep of sloth, and hasten to watch."[73] Sometimes your soul is filled with such terrible laziness and stony insensibility that you completely despair of being able to drive it away. It

even seems that physical illness would be preferable to such spiritual slothfulness.

* * *

"Thy will be done." When you wish for physical health and do everything you can to ensure it, and yet remain ill, then say: "Thy will be done." When you undertake something but your enterprise fails, say: "Thy will be done." When you do good to others, but they repay you with evil, say: "Thy will be done." When you would like to sleep but are attacked by insomnia, say: "Thy will be done." In general, do not become irritated when anything is not done according to your will, but learn to submit in all things to the will of the Heavenly Father. You would like not to experience any temptations, and yet the enemy daily harasses you with them. He provokes and annoys you any way he can. Do not become irritated, but say: "Thy will be done."

* * *

Everything irritates an impatient person—the merest trifles, even the smoke of a candle blowing on him, because he loves himself and cares too much for the comfort of his carnal man, whom he should crucify more often. Sometimes his soul is overwhelmed with sins and passions, but seeing, he does not see, knowing, he does not know, feeling, he does not feel. However, as soon as the face of this man is dirtied by a little smoke, he notices it immediately and begins to pity himself, even though there is nothing for him to trouble about, for the smoke does not strike, does not sting, does not harm, but only blows in the face like a light breeze.

* * *

If you wish to live long on the earth, do not hurry to live carnally, to overeat, to get drunk, to smoke, to fornicate, to live in luxury, to indulge yourself. A carnal way of life is death; therefore, the Holy Scriptures call our flesh moribund: "*the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts*" (Eph 4:22). If you wish to live long, live in the spirit, for in the spirit is life: "*If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live*" (Rom 8:13), both here on earth and there in heaven. Be temperate

and simple in food and drink; preserve chastity; do not foolishly squander your life; do not seek after riches and luxury; strive to be content with little; keep peace with all; envy no one; respect and love all; above all, strive always to bear Christ in your heart, and you shall live in peace and prosperity for many years.

My brothers and sisters who are zealots of piety! You may hear, perhaps mostly from the members of your household more often than not, that you are a disagreeable, intolerable person. You will encounter serious dislike and enmity because of your piety, although those who are inimical to you would never admit that their enmity is directed against you because you are pious. Do not be disturbed by this, do not despair, because the devil can in reality exaggerate some of your infirmities (from which you, being human, are not exempt) far beyond proportion. Instead, remember these words of the Saviour: "*A man's enemies will be those of his own household*" (Matt 10:36). Correct your faults and remain steadfast in piety. Commit your conscience, life, and deeds to God Who knows our hearts. However, judge yourself impartially. Do you not truly have a difficult character, especially in your interaction with your family? Perhaps you are morose, unkind, unsociable, and taciturn. Expand your heart for sociability and kindness, but do not be overindulgent; when you reprove, be gentle, calm, and do not provoke. "*Let all that you do be done with love*" (1 Cor 16:14), said the Apostle Paul. Be patient, do not find fault in everything. Endure some things, passing them by in silence, pretending not to see them. "*Love bears all things … endures all things*" (1 Cor 13:7). Sometimes an impatient reproof gives rise to enmity, because the reproof was not made in the spirit of meekness and love, but in the desire for others' submission.

Sometimes people younger than you, or those of equal station with you, or older than you give you broad hints about ways in which you can improve yourself, which you cannot endure, and you become angry with them. We must endure and hear everything useful with love, no matter who is speaking to us. Our self-love conceals our faults from us, but they are visible to others, and they point them out to us. Remember that "*we are members of one another*" (Eph 4:25), and we are thus even obligated to correct one another. If you cannot endure being lectured by others, and become irritated with those who instruct you, it means that you are proud. This only proves that the fault they suggest you improve is actually there.

Since God is an All-righteous Spirit, He is Himself present in His laws and commandments, for His righteousness is expressed in them. Therefore, the Lord says, "*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word"* (My commandments). "*He who does not love Me does not keep not My words. If you love Me, keep My commandments*" (John 14: 23, 24, 15).

Pray for the departed as though your own soul were in the fires of hell, as though you yourself were in torment. Feel their torments with your whole heart and pray fervently, ardently that they may rest in peace in a place of light and green pastures, in a place of rest.

* * *

Call on the saints with faith unashamed, love unfeigned, and proper reverence if you wish them to hear you and answer your prayer. Remember —like seeks like. The saints have pleased God with their faith and love, and they want you to do the same.

* * *

A self-loving man doesn't waste his energy on doing good for others. He even begrudges his throat for the instruction of others (if he is a teacher or a priest). He begrudges his whole heart, because he, so to speak serves his neighbor with only half his heart, and sometimes quite without any heart at all. He begrudges his physical strength as well. He is as scared as a rabbit, and, being afraid of getting sick from working too hard, prefers to avoid it entirely.

* * *

Faith in God as "He Who Is" is the source of life for the soul. How can we imagine "Him Who Is" to ourselves? Consider everything visible and invisible to be nothing, and imagine that the Lord alone exists.

* * *

In order to petition the king or any other illustrious personage (or anyone, for that matter), it is necessary to reach him, see him, and stand before him, face to face. But here on earth persons are often separated by great

distances, sometimes we have to get through many intermediaries to reach our desired person. But to reach the heavenly King or the heavenly Queen, the Theotokos, or the angels and saints, we need to simply set aside our great unbelief, to empty the soul of passions, to take living faith, zeal, and love for companions, and we shall reach and boldly beseech the Lord, His most-pure Mother, or the angels and saints.

* * *

No intellectual work can be accomplished without a preconceived plan, in the likeness of the All-creating Lord, Who first conceived the world and its plan, and only afterward created the universe through His Son and Holy Spirit. It would be presumptuous to write a book without planning it in advance. "*For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it?"* (Luke 14:28; compare Matt 7:24). You have to see the whole work with all its main ideas beforehand with the spiritual eyes of the heart. To do otherwise would be to travel an unknown road willingly blindfolded.

Pray to the Lord for the repose of the souls of your departed forefathers, fathers, and brothers, every morning and every evening, so that the remembrance of death may live in you, and hope in the future life, after death, may not be extinguished in you, and your spirit may be daily humbled by the thought of the evanescence of your life. Also pray daily to the glorified saints, that they may enlighten your path by their prayers, and that they may intercede for the forgiveness of your sins, and that you yourself may remember that after death there is eternal glorification and blessedness for good deeds and eternal condemnation for evil ones.

* * *

Sometimes during prayer you feel a kind of estrangement from God and despair. Do not be distracted by this feeling: it is from the devil. Say in your heart: I, a wretched one, do not despair of my salvation, "*and emboldened by Thine immeasurable compassion, I come unto Thee. If there is any hope of salvation for me, if Thy loving mercy can overcome the multitude of my transgressions, be Thou my Saviour."*[74]

When the devil tries to undermine the words of your spoken prayer with a torrent of subtle thoughts, say to yourself: "The power of the Saviour is in

every word and in every sound.”

* * *

“*You have not known, … Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?”* (John 14:9, 10). Do you not know that during prayer the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are in you and you are in Them?

If the devil whispers to your heart during the reading of the canons and the akathists to the Saviour, to His Mother, to the guardian angel, or other prayers, saying: “This is untrue, that is an exaggeration,” thereby robbing your heart of the power and truth of the words of prayer, then be “*like a deaf man … that heard not; … a fool, that he may become wise*” (Psalm 38:14; 1 Cor 3:18). Do not for a moment agree in your heart with the falsehood of the enemy, or try to reason with his infernal reasoning, but believe firmly in the truth of all the Church’s prayers and hymns of praise in all their fullness, knowing that they are the words of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming, through the mouth of holy men, praises due to the Saviour, His Mother, and the saints. Do not forget our infirmities and accursedness. Remember: “*the church of the living God [is] the pillar and ground of the truth*” (1 Tim 3:15).

Every priest is the apostle of his village or parish (or city church), and he must walk from house to house preaching the Kingdom of God, instructing the ignorant, awakening the careless, living a passionate and carnal life, to a Christian life. He must encourage and stimulate those who are pious and sober-minded with the hope of future recompense; he must strengthen and comfort the discontented. This should be the main purpose of processions with the cross on feast days. Sometimes, we priests allow ourselves to eat and drink when walking with the Cross. This should never be. We must preach with the Cross in our hand that “*Christ came upon earth in order to raise us up to heaven*”;[75] that it is not right to attach ourselves to anything earthly; and that we must use our time wisely to win eternity, to cleanse our hearts from every impurity, and to do as many good works as possible. “*My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work*” (John 4:34).

What does it mean if we are overcome with the heavy sleep of slothfulness and stony insensibility during prayer, during the preparation of a sermon, or while teaching the law of God? It means that the grace of God

is leaving us, according to God's wise and good intention, in order to strengthen our hearts for our own willing spiritual labors. Sometimes, grace carries us like children, guiding and supporting us as though by the hand. Then it is twice as easy for us to do works of virtue. However, sometimes it leaves us alone with our weakness, so that we would not become slothful, but will begin to labor, and through our labor become worthy of the gift of grace. At such times, as free beings we should willingly show our amendment and zeal to God. It would be foolish to blame God for depriving us of His grace; for when the Lord pleases, He takes away His grace from us fallen and unworthy creatures. At such times, we must learn patience and bless the Lord: "*The Lord gave [His grace], and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord*" (Job 1:21).

During times of laziness and hardness of heart, people sometimes become too familiar with God because of their faint-heartedness and impatience and allow themselves various oddities in their voice and movements during prayer, signifying impatience, dissatisfaction, even insolence toward God. Beware of this any way you can, and strive to overcome your laziness. You must conquer the enemy and your passions.

* * *

If you wish to be humble, consider yourself worthy of all enmity, hatred, and slander from others. Do not become irritated and do not nourish malice against those who bear you ill will, slander you, or falsely blame you. Say: "Holy Father, Thy will be done!" Remember the words of the Lord: a "*servant is not greater than his master. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you*" (John 13:16; 15:18). If the world hated Him, the Most righteous, the Most merciful, then why do you think it strange if other people hate you, a sinful and evil man?

When you ask the Lord to enlighten your mind and warm heart before you write a sermon, or a letter to your parents, relations, or friends, and the Lord does not seem to hear you, and you remain in darkness and coldness, do not grow fainthearted, do not despair, do not be angry, do not complain at the Lord's inattention to you. The Lord only tests your patience, your faith, hope, and devotion to Him, the Almighty. Remember that it is easy for Him to immediately illumine and enlighten you, and in a few minutes

you will be able to write an excellent sermon or a letter full of warm feeling, full of light and elevated thoughts.

* * *

"*We wanted to come to you … time and again—but Satan hindered us*" (1 Thess 2:18). From this we see that it is Satan who sometimes hinders our seeing each other or writing to our relations, friends, or acquaintances. How infirm is man by himself! How limited he is! It is not only God Who does not allow him to do what he wishes, but even Satan forbids him.

Pampering the flesh and stony insensibility to everything spiritual and sacred are the oppression of the enemy, although the carnal man does not consider it to be oppression, because he likes it. However, those who desire to live a spiritual life look upon it as oppression, because it does not allow God or His grace into their hearts, quickening and enlightening them, because such oppression makes the soul unfruitful for deeds of faith, hope, and love. At such times, we become somehow completely carnal, as though having no spirit. O, how multifarious are the persecutions of the enemy! As soon as you grieve from the depths of our hearts at this hardened insensibility, as soon as you lament before the Lord, it passes away, and the heart warms up and softens, becoming capable of spiritual contemplation and holy feelings.

* * *

When you pray for others, either aloud or silently, either for family members or strangers, even if they have not asked for prayer, pray for them with the same ardor and zeal as you would pray for yourself. Remember the commandment of the law: "*Thou shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (Matt 19:19; 22:39; Lev 19:18). Observe this commandment in all occasions; love your neighbor as yourself. Do not try to deal craftily with the Lord, "*who triest the very hearts and reins*" (Psalm 7:10; compare Jer 11:20; Rev 2:23), lest He despise your prayer as vain and lying.

Love does not suffer self-justification, does not exalt itself, is not proud.

* * *

When we read certain prayers for the first time or read them seldom, we read them willingly and with deep feeling because of their novelty, but afterward, the more often we repeat them, the less we care for them. They cease to interest us, and it is with difficulty that we force ourselves to read them with the previous emotion. Here is what we must do to combat this. We must imagine that we are saying these beautiful prayers—to which we have grown accustomed, but which so deeply interested us when we first read them—for the first time. We must focus with our whole heart on every word of the prayer, and we must value every word. This phenomenon in our soul is the consequence of original sin, our original inconstancy in the truth. And even now we cannot be firmly established in the truth—as soon as we stand fast, we begin to waver again. As often as this happens with our prayer, it also happens with faith, our friendship with other people, our love for God and our neighbor, and in general all virtue: in all these things we reveal ourselves to be inconstant in truth.

* * *

It also sometimes happens during prayer that our heart becomes impiously ashamed of the words of the prayer or the Lord God Himself before others, and we pronounce the words of the prayer half-heartedly. We must conquer this ungodly, man-pleasing, diabolical shame and fear, and say the prayers from our whole soul loudly, with simplicity of heart, imagining God alone standing before us, and considering all else as simply not existing. "*Whosoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels*" (Mark 8:38).

If you consider anything other than the Lord God to be important and great and neglect Him Who alone exists, Who alone is great, then you are most impiously arrogant. Reckon everything as nothing compared to the Lord, and cling to Him alone.

* * *

Man is beloved of the Lord, and the whole world is obedient to him. The Son of God Himself came down from heaven on earth to save him from everlasting torments, to reconcile him with God. He gave man fruits and

flesh to eat and many different drinks to please his taste, but not to excite his passions, not to become his sole enjoyment, for the Christian has great, spiritual, divine delights. Carnal delights must be always made subject to these higher ones; they must be restrained or completely suppressed when they hinder spiritual delights. This means that the temporary prohibition of certain food and drink by the Church (during the fasts) are not intended to torment man, not to limit his freedom, as worldly people say, but give him true, lasting, eternal delights. Therefore, meat and wine or spirits are forbidden (during Lent) precisely because man is very dear to God, to help his heart cling to God alone, not to anything perishable, unworthy of him. But man, perverted by sins, easily attaches himself to earthly pleasures, forgetting that his true enjoyment, his true life, is the eternal God, not the pleasant arousal of the flesh.

* * *

The attention and understanding of the heart are gradually deadened in those who pray without fervor, without their whole heart. They are those who, seeing, do not see, and, hearing, do not understand (Luke 8:10) the words of the prayer. "For a pretense, they make long prayers," and, poor creatures, they do not realize that for pointlessly increasing the number of their words they "*will receive great condemnation*" (Mark 12:40).

Do you not mock the faults of your neighbor; do you not despise him; do you not hate him because of his faults? "*Love bears all things*" (1 Cor 13:7). Remember this, and endure the faults and iniquities of your brother, so that God may bear with yours. Have patience with our infirm members, for we are all one body in the Lord.

Feel the words of the Saviour's prayer to His Father with your whole heart: "*As You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us*" (John 17:21), and strive every possible way to become united to God yourself, and to unite others to Him. Uphold your pious communion with others at any cost. Do not spare yourself or anything belonging to you for the sake of maintaining the union of love. For God is our almighty Life-giver, the all-merciful Giver of all things. He will sustain our life if we labor for our neighbor's benefit, and He will give us everything we need if we scatter all our property for the sake of maintaining mutual love.

As Christ is wholly present in every particle of the Body and Blood, so He is also wholly present in every good thought and word.

* * *

If you truly wish to be humble, then yearn for offenses and persecutions as a hungry man yearns for food, for by the justice of God you are worthy of this.

* * *

If you wish to be truly humble, then consider yourself lower than everyone else, worthy of being trampled on by all, for you yourself daily, hourly trample the law of the Lord, and therefore you trample the Lord Himself.

* * *

When your heart is wounded by the enemy concealed within you, who causes internal confusion, constraint, and depression, do not then preach a sermon. Otherwise, instead of profit, you may give rise to temptation. Instead of spiritual nourishment, you may cause spiritual dizziness and sickness. Neither should you reprove anyone during such a time: you will only irritate others, not correct them. In general, when the enemy nests in your soul, it is better to be silent; we are then unworthy of the word, which is the gift of the Hypostatic Word. First drive out the enemy, regain peace in your heart, and only then speak.

* * *

The one simple Spirit in three Persons, the one Wisdom in three Persons brought everything into existence from nonexistence. The one Wisdom in three Persons is God.

* * *

Some ascribe their entire welfare, the correctness of their behavior before God, to the mere reading of all the appointed prayers, without paying

attention to how prepared their hearts are for prayer, without paying attention to their inner improvement. Many, for instance, read the prayers before Holy Communion without the words resonating in their hearts. During these prayers, we should pay attention more than ever to the amendment and preparedness of the heart to receive the Holy Sacrament. If your heart is righteous, if, by God's mercy, it is ready to meet the Bridegroom, then, thank God, it is well with you, even if you did not succeed in reading all the appointed prayers in time. "*For the kingdom of God is not in word but in power*" (1 Cor 4:20). Obedience to our mother the Church in all things is proper, and if it is possible for one "to receive" prolonged prayer, let him pray long. But "*all cannot accept this saying*" (Matt 19:11). If long prayer is not compatible with fervor of spirit, then it is better to say a short, fervent prayer. Remember that the one word of the publican, spoken from a burning heart, justified him. God does not look at the multitude of words, but at the disposition of the heart. The most important thing is living, heartfelt faith and genuine repentance for sins.

Severe frosts and sudden thaws visibly show, on a small scale, that the Lord has made everything, the whole universe, and that He can destroy everything when it pleases Him to do so. The covering of the rivers, lakes, and seas with ice and the subsequent breaking up of the ice reveals the same truth, as do blossoming flowers, the growth of earthly plants in the spring and summer, and their destruction in the autumn. Also the birth and death of man. The Lord assembled us. He will disassemble us as well.

* * *

Priestly prayer for the people has great power with God, if only the priest calls upon the Lord with his whole heart, with faith and love. God grant that there may be more priests who pray to God with a burning spirit, for who should pray to the Lord for His sheep with such power, if not the priest, who has received grace and authority to do so from God Himself?

* * *

When you pray with tears and love for the Lord's sheep and your thoughts begin to praise you to yourself, say to them: It is not I who pray for God's people, but the "*Spirit Himself*" within me "*makes intercession*" for them "*with groanings which cannot be uttered*" (Rom 8:26), and the

Spirit bound me, too, at that time, in the sweet bonds of His love and of heartfelt devotion. That this is true is evident from the fact that the sweetness of prayer and love can quickly forsake me.

The truth of Christ's Mysteries is ensured by Christ Himself. The truth is further proved by the visible and invisible worlds, created and upheld in their existence by Him, by our cleansing from sins, and by the peace and joy that we experience in our heart after communion.

* * *

"Charity is not easily provoked," but you are often provoked. Look: the enemy at this time uses his cunning to attack you, for during anger faith in God is extinguished and boldness before God is lost.

* * *

Images of worldly vanity on which we gaze with pleasure and the heart's sympathy pamper, weaken, and disturb the soul. They deprive us of purity of heart and of boldness before God; therefore, it is good not to frequent theaters, not to attend splendid and convivial parties, not to see those who whirl about in dances, not to waste time at worldly spectacles that represent the multifarious vanities of this world. It is good to constantly hold fast by God alone (Psalm 73:27). In the world there are so many enticements, that the eye is never satisfied with seeing.

"Hallowed be Thy name!" This is our first desire and petition: let the name of God be hallowed in us and through us. Let us remember that we are created in the image and likeness of the Lord God, in the likeness of His holiness, but, alas, we sinned, we lost our holiness. We are born in sins and iniquities, and we continue to live in sins and iniquities like "*illegitimate and not sons*" (Heb 12:8). What other care should occupy us in our fallen state but the desire to become like our Heavenly Father, our Prototype? The Lord Himself requires this of us: "*Be holy, for I am holy*" (1 Pet 1:16; Lev 19:2). This should be our first desire, the purpose of our entire life. The prayer's second petition is an elucidation of the first.

Our heart daily dies a spiritual death. Only ardent, tearful prayer is the heart's resurrection, making it breathe again. If we do not daily pray with spiritual warmth, we will quickly die spiritually.

* * *

Sometimes during prayer the reason becomes puffed up, and the words of the prayer do not find a place in it because of its carnality and falsehood, but the words of the prayer are spirit and truth, molten silver coming from a soul on fire with faith and love, "*which from the earth is tried and purified seven times in the fire.*" "*The ungodly walk on every side*" (Psalm 11:7, 9 [The last verse is translated according to the Slavonic rendering]) but do not penetrate their meaning.

The insensibility of the heart to the truth of the words of prayer is a result of the heart's unbelief and the lack of the sense of its sinfulness. These, in their turn, come from a secret feeling of pride. According to his feelings during prayer, a person can recognize whether he is proud or humble: the more ardent and fiery the prayer, the humbler the person. But the more unfeeling and cold the prayer, the prouder the person.

* * *

"*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all*" (Jas 2:10). This is true of both moral law and dogma. He who teaches all the truths correctly, but transgresses against any one of them in his life, shall be found guilty of all, guilty of transgressing the one truth, indivisible in Him being the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, Who said, "*I am … the truth*" (John 14:6). Why? Because God is a simple, infinite Being. Even a single wicked thought is "*an abomination to the Lord*" (Prov 15:26). He who transgresses against the truth of dogma transgresses against Him Who said, "*I am … the truth*" (John 14:6).

Never despair of God's mercy, no matter what sin bound you through the temptation of the devil. Instead, pray with your whole heart, with the hope of forgiveness. Knock at the door of God's mercy, and it shall be opened unto you. I, a simple priest, am an example for you. Some of my sins, instigated by the devil, may include hatred for a brother for whatever reason, but even if it is a good reason, I become completely disturbed, I set my brother against me, and I unworthily celebrate the Holy Mysteries, not from willful neglect, but by being unprepared and succumbing to the attack of the devil. Yet after repentance the Lord forgives everything, especially after worthy communion of the Holy Mysteries. I become white as snow by

the Blood of Christ; a most heavenly peace dwells in my heart; it becomes light, so light, and I feel blessed. Then, indeed, I forget all troubles, anxieties, and the constraint of the enemy. I become entirely renewed, as though resurrected. Therefore, do not despair, brothers; whatever sins you may have committed, only repent and confess them with a contrite heart and humble spirit. Glory, O Lord, to Your mercy! Glory, O Lord, to Your long-suffering and forbearance!

* * *

"*Love one another fervently with a pure heart*" (1 Pet 1:22). Remember these words of the Apostle, and act according to them. Forgive them that trespass against you, knowing that as the enemy disturbs you and sometimes sets you at enmity against others, so he also disturbs and sets them against you. Love and pity your enemies, as those who have gone astray. "*Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing*" (1 Pet 3:9).

Be moderate in all religious works, because moderating your virtue according to your strength, specific circumstances of time, place, and preceding work, is prudent and wise. It is good, for instance, to pray with a pure heart, but as soon as there is no agreement between the prayer and your powers (energy), if the specific circumstances of place, time, and preceding work make prayer difficult, then it ceases to be a virtue. Therefore the Apostle Peter says, "*Add to your … virtue knowledge*" (that is, do not be carried away by the heart only) "*and to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance*" (2 Pet 1:5, 6).

"*He who does not gather with Me scatters*" (Luke 11:23). It is necessary to advance in the spiritual life, to ascend higher and higher, to increase the stores of our good works more and more. If we remain at the same level of moral perfection, on one step of the ladder of Christian virtues, it is the same as going back; if we do not gather, it is the same as scattering.

In order for your prayer to burn before the Lord, do not begrudge burning a wax candle before an icon of the Lord during prayer. Remember that you burn it before the inaccessible Light, before Him Who enlightens you with His light. Your candle is like a burnt offering to the Lord; let it be a gift to God from your whole heart; let it remind you that you yourself should also

be a burning and shining light. "*He was,*" it is written of St John the Forerunner, "*the burning and shining lamp*" (John 5:35).

The Lord, for all His limitlessness, is at the same time such a simple Being, that He is present entirely in the name of the Holy Trinity, in the name of the Lord, in the name of Jesus Christ.

* * *

Who among us mortals is worthy of the Lord? Only he who considers nothing to be important, except the Creator, to whom the Creator is everything. O man! Let not your heart cleave to anything but the Creator. Cling to Him in the simplicity of your heart. Let neither food, nor dress, nor any human person, nor riches, nor the comforts of this life, nor the glory of this world, nor anything worldly tempt you.

* * *

I offer material light to the Lord, to Our Lady, to an angel or saint so that the Lord will bestow the light of grace, spiritual light, on me through their prayers, so that He will lead me out of the darkness of sin into the light of the knowledge of God and virtue. I offer material fire, so that the fire of the grace of the Holy Spirit may be kindled in my heart, so that it may extinguish the fire of the passions in my miserable heart. I offer a lit candle with the desire that I may become a light-bearer myself, burning and shining to all that are in the Church. These are the reasons why I put candles before the icons; these are my thoughts when I put candles on the candle stands. I acknowledge that I place these candles before the icons with the hope of receiving spiritual blessings from those holy persons who are represented on them. I acknowledge my spiritual avarice. But it is the law of reciprocity to expect a gift for a gift. "*With what measure you use, it will be measured back to you*" (Matt 7:2). I am an infirm, carnal, sinful man —what's mine is yours! Since I am not always able to bring an offering of a heart burning with faith and love to my Lord, to His most-pure Mother, to an angel of God, or to a saint, I, a carnal, material man, at least bring a material gift, a lighted candle. May the Lord look down from heaven upon this poor gift of my zeal, and may He give me more in return. He alone is rich and enriches all, while I am poor and needy. He is surrounded with inaccessible light; I am in darkness. I have weak faith; may He grant me the

gift of faith. I am poor in love; may He enrich my heart with this priceless heavenly treasure. I am powerless for all good; may He give me that power. I have the desire for heavenly blessings, and here is a material pledge of this desire; may the all-endowing Lord grant to me, by the prayers of His most-pure Mother and those of the angels and saints, "all things that I ask that are profitable unto salvation."

When anyone accuses you of imperfections and faults in your works, humbly acknowledge the justice of such censure, and say, "Yes, it is true, I am sinful, most sinful. I do not do my work with proper care and willingness. Pray for me, brother, that the Lord may teach and help me, by His grace, to fulfill the duties of my calling and my work of serving others with due care and willingness." Should anyone find fault with your abilities, say, "I do not give myself such and not other abilities, they are the gift of God; therefore, to find fault with my abilities is the same as to find fault with the Creator Who gave them." When your own relations blame you and expose your weaknesses before others, say to them, "I am truly as you describe me; but it is no advantage to you that I am such a man, nor is there any benefit to you if you defame me and mock me, for to mock the infirmity or weakness of your brother is foolish and inhuman. It is better to hide such an infirmity, because my infirmity is your infirmity, my shame is your shame, for I am your member, and you, too, are not without infirmity. Let us, therefore, pray that the Lord heal our infirmities, for all of us are infected with the leprosy of sin." "*Love endures all things*" (1 Cor 13:7) and does not put weaknesses to shame.

Great is our negligence and slothfulness in prayer. We are always inclined to pray (and often do) negligently, just to get it over with quickly. We hurry, we skip over the surface like a rock on water, and we do not descend into the depths of our hearts. Therefore, our prayer is like the wind —it makes a noise, passes on, and that is all.

* * *

When the darkness of the accursed one covers you (i.e., doubt, despondency, despair, confusion), then invoke the sweetest name of Jesus Christ with your whole heart, and in Him you will find all—light, strength, trust, comfort, and peace. In Him you will find the greatest mercy,

goodness, and generosity. All these mercies you will find comprised in His name alone, as though in a rich treasury.

* * *

I have received and continue to receive everything from the Lord. How, then, shall I not turn to Him alone in prayer for everything I need? How shall I not hope to receive everything from Him alone? I have received from Him life and all things. He alone can give me everything that is necessary for my temporal and eternal welfare. It is, so to say, His business to give me everything necessary: such is His merciful and bountiful nature.

* * *

Believe and hope to quickly obtain from the Lord everything good for the edification of your neighbor, or all things for our salvation. Do not hesitate, do not doubt even for a single moment, in the possibility of receiving what you pray for.

* * *

"*With God all things are possible. All things are possible to him who believes. Hope does not disappoint*" (Matt 19:26; Mark 9:23; 10:27; Rom 5:5). It is only unbelief, a distrustful heart, that makes us ashamed.

"*And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help my unbelief*" (Mark 9:24). What grief! He is constrained on every side—he sorrows for his son, but he has no faith in his heart. It is impossible for him not to weep. Therefore, he says with tears: "*Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!*" It is the same with us. When misfortune threatens us, and we have no faith in our heart to avert the misfortune, then how shall we not weep over our double misfortune! Many have hearts of stone and do not feel the necessity of faith for their deliverance from misfortune.

"*But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions*" (Mark 10:22). We, too, often become sad and weak in heart and body from a single word asking a sacrifice of us for the sake of the heavenly kingdom, while we were so cheerful just a moment before!

Why is the Creed sung before the transubstantiation of the Holy Gifts? Why does the priest also say the Creed to himself inside the altar at the same time as it is sung by the people? So that those present will believe and remember that the Holy Trinity takes part in the transubstantiation of the Holy Gifts, and that the mystery of the Eucharist is the work of the Holy Trinity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is also done so that the priest himself may celebrate the Holy Mysteries without condemnation, with undoubting faith in the mercy and omnipotence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and afterward, at the proper time, commune of it, for at this time especially great faith is required of the priest, as this is the moment the enemy uses all his efforts to strike the mind and heart with coldness and unbelief, or to disturb him by doubt.

* * *

It is the wonder of wonders that my Lord and Creator was pleased to transform my nature, corrupted by sin, and create it anew, in the same way that He changes the bread and wine into His Body and Blood, in the same way that He changed the fire into dew.

* * *

To whomever you wish to pray, before praying, first ask him in your heart to be found worthy of offering your heartfelt prayer, praise, or thanksgiving, for we can only pray with the help of the Holy Spirit and those saints through whose intercession we wish to pray to the Saviour. Before your prayer, raise your heartfelt voice to Him, that He may grant you the grace of sincere prayer, that He may lay His easy yoke and His light burden on your heart, that they may destroy the diabolical pride and resistance of your mind and heart. If you wish to pray to Our Lady, ask Her to make you worthy of offering Her your prayer, praise, or thanksgiving from the whole heart. If you wish to pray to an angel, ask the Lord to make you worthy of offering him your prayer, your hymn praising the grace, brightness, and goodness of his nature. If you wish to pray to a saint, invoke the Holy Spirit, by Whose holiness the saints are sanctified, that you may worthily call upon him or ascribe praises and thanksgiving to him; for we all can only pray worthily and to increased life by the strength of the Life-giving Holy Spirit. God’s saints are the pure breath of the Holy Spirit. “*The*

wind [the Spirit] blows where it wishes" (John 3:8). (That is, He breathes in any soul He pleases.) The Holy Virgin was superabundantly sanctified and purified by the Holy Spirit. The angels are also sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and they live and breathe by Him, as we live by the flesh and breathe air. Prayer in its purest form is nothing but the breath of the Holy Ghost. "*The Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*" (Rom 8:26).

In the present time, learned men have erected, and continue to erect, an enormous idol, commanding all to worship it as they do. This idol is negative literature. The impure spirit that inspires us is a proud, impious, unbelieving mind. The devil is cunning, O how cunning! He has invented even in Christianity a refined idolatry appropriate to the direction and spirit of this age, the degree of its mental development. What an evil, crafty being! How he perverts poor humanity that has withdrawn from sincere faith in Christ! How powerfully he draws men into hell, using ropes woven by the men themselves! My God! My God! He destroys us using our own mind, which should lead us to the eternal, living God! With our own ladles he draws for us the deadly water of worldly, vain wisdom, and gives us and other men to drink of it, instead of the living water of the Word of God! And we drink and drink, never suspecting that it is the water of death.

* * *

Remember: man is a great, precious being in God's estimation, but this great creature, after falling into sin, is a weak creature, subject to thousands of infirmities. Love him, honor him, but at the same time bear with his infirmities, weaknesses, passions, and actions. "*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*" (Matt 19:19), for we are both sinners. "*Bear one another's infirmities, and so fulfill the law of Christ*" (Gal 6:2; compare Rom 15:1). Great are these words; ponder them deeply. They have the same meaning as the words of the Lord's Prayer: "We forgive them that trespass against us."

Great and worthy of honor is the body of the Holy Church, Whose Head is Jesus Christ Himself. Remember that you are an infirm, worthless member of this great and worthily honored body, and that you receive everything from the Head of the body of the Church, Christ, and that you are animated by His Spirit. Remember that in the Church, there are millions

of powerful members, who have received great and manifold spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit, each according to his unique merit and receptivity. Respect every Christian as a member of the Church of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. Do not in your pride consider anyone as ignorant of the truths of the faith, deprived of the gifts of the Spirit, "*for Christ is all and in all*" (Col 3:11), and the Lord inwardly reveals Himself to everyone, enlightens everyone, according to the measure of the receptivity of each person. He gives His gifts to all, being no respecter of persons. Therefore, say to yourself, "I am a small member of the great and worthily honored body of the Church. I must regard all the other members with love and respect, as dear and beloved members of my Christ."

When others reproach us for anything, it should not irritate us nor make us despondent, but it should humble us, since we are morally worthless, and it should make us turn to God with the fervent request for healing from our infirmities the replenishment of what is lacking in us through His grace. To grow irritated, especially when we are reproached with weaknesses that actually exist in us, would only be adding one disease to another, one passion to another. It would mean that we are sick with the voluntary blindness of self-love, which does not wish to see its own dark side and leads to willful destruction. To despair is also most foolish, for by God's grace a Christian can always change for the better if he so wishes. It is for this purpose that the Lord sends us these accusers, so that they may open our spiritual eyes, and we will see the perversity of our action and correct ourselves. He does not send them to cast us down into despair. Despondency is itself a sin, the work of the devil. Reproof should produce in us "*godly sorrow [that] produces repentance leading to salvation*" (2 Cor 7:10), not the sorrow of self-love.

Notes

1. From the Akathist to the Sweetest Lord Jesus.
2. Matt 6:24.
3. *The Divine Liturgy of Our Father Among the Saints John Chrysostom: Slavonic-English Parallel Text*, 3rd edition (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2013) p.141.
4. The Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7).
5. The last petition of all litanies, intoned by the deacon during services.
6. Exclamation from Vespers.
7. From the Liturgy of St Basil the Great.
8. From the Prayer to the Holy Spirit. *Prayer Book*, Fourth Edition–Revised (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2003) p. 8.
9. These litanies are call-and-response petitions of a general nature intoned by the deacon and answered by the choir.
10. From the Akathist to the Mother of God. *Prayer Book*, Fourth Edition–Revised (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2003) p. 291.
11. Prayer to the Holy Spirit. *Prayer Book*, Fourth Edition–Revised (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2003) p. 8.
12. Exclamation from the Liturgy. *The Divine Liturgy of Our Father Among the Saints John Chrysostom: Slavonic-English Parallel Text*, 3rd edition (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2013) p. 169.
13. In Russian, “the Church” is given a feminine pronoun, both in the sense of the “church building” and “the Body of Christ.”
14. From the Prokeimenon at Vespers; compare Psalm 60:5.
15. Priest’s exclamation at memorial services.
16. The Russian word used here is *milostynia*, a word that shares a root with *milost*, meaning “mercy” or “compassion.”

17. Prayer to the Holy Mother of God at Compline. *The Unabbreviated Horologion or Book of the Hours* (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1997) p. 230.

18. Various litanies.

19. Evening Prayer of St John of Damascus. *Prayer Book*, Fourth Edition–Revised (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2003) p. 57.

20. Evening Prayer of St John Damascene. *Prayer Book*, Fourth Edition–Revised (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2003) p. 57.

21. Paraphrase from the Liturgy.

22. From the Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian.

23. From the Akathist to the Sweetest Lord Jesus. *Prayer Book*, Fourth Edition–Revised (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2003) p. 280.

24. This refers to the The Akathist to the Sweetest Lord Jesus.

25. Adapted from prayers at the memorial service.

26. St John is referring to Psalm 19:5.

27. Exclamation at the beginning of Matins. *The Unabbreviated Horologion or Book of the Hours* (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1997) p. 49.

28. From the prayer of the priest at the Liturgy during the Cherubic Hymn. *The Divine Liturgy of Our Father Among the Saints John Chrysostom: Slavonic-English Parallel Text*, 3rd edition (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2013) p.119.

29. From the 9th Ode of the Paschal Canon of St John of Damascus. *The Paschal Service* (Syosset, New York: Department of Religious Education, 1986) p. 38.

30. St Simeon is the most well known compiler of saints' lives in the Orthodox Church.

31. From the fourth Prayer before Communion: composed by St Simeon Metaphrastes.

32. From the Akathist to the Sweetest Lord Jesus.

33. From the First Eirmos of the Nativity Canon.

34. From the Prayer of the Priest at the Liturgy during Cherubic Hymn. *The Divine Liturgy of Our Father Among the Saints John Chrysostom: Slavonic-English Parallel Text*, 3rd edition (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2013) p. 119.

35. From the Troparia at Matins on Palm Sunday.
36. From the Glorification at Matins on St Thomas Sunday.
37. From the Paschal Canon.
38. From the Akathist to the Most-holy Mother of God.
39. The Orthodox Church holds that the souls of the departed are in an intermediate state during forty days after death.
40. From the Akathist to the Sweetest Jesus.
41. From the Divine Liturgy of St John Chrysostom.
42. From a general troparion to a monastic father.
43. From the Akathist to the Most-holy Mother of God.
44. From Metropolitan Philaret's Catechism.
45. From the Matins Antiphon, Tone 4.
46. From the Prayer from the Office for the Burial of the Dead.
47. *The Unabbreviated Horologion or Book of the Hours* (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1997) 48. From the Akathist to the Most-holy Theotokos.
49. The *Urodivie* (fools for Christ) were men and women whose religious enthusiasm reached such a height that they lived an entirely spiritual life and paid no heed to outward things; they left all for Christ's sake, endured the greatest privations, and sought humiliation and dishonor. The outward condition was so entirely lost sight of that they sometimes appeared rough, ignorant, and even foolish—"they were fools for Christ's sake"—but in reality these outward attributes only concealed the height of their religious enthusiasm, and therefore they constantly and deeply influenced those among whom they lived. The Orthodox Church honors some of the *Urodivie* as saints. *Urodivie* sometimes even now appear in Russia, and always exercise a great influence upon the people.—*Translator's Note from 1897*.
50. From the Canon to the Archangel.
51. From the Prayer for a woman on the first day after childbirth.
52. From the Canon of St Andrew of Crete.
53. From the Canon before Holy Communion.
54. From the Paschal Canon.
55. From the Paschal Canon.
56. From the Fourth Prayer of St Simeon Metaphrastes before Holy Communion.

57. Frequent communion was not generally practiced in the Russian Church of the nineteenth century, something against which St John fervently battled.

58. From the Matins Antiphon, Tone 4.

59. From the Fourth Prayer of St Simeon Metaphrastes before Communion.

60. From the Eighth Prayer of the Priest at Matins.

61. A phrase from the "Invocation of the Saint Whose Name We Bear." *Prayer Book*, Fourth Edition–Revised (Jordanville, New York: Holy Trinity Publications, 2003) p. x.

62. From the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

63. From the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

64. From the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

65. This was written before the Russian translation of the Holy Scriptures was published by the Holy Synod.

66. From the Stikhira on Pentecost.

67. From the Resurrectional Stikhira on "Lord I have Cried," Tone 3.

68. Written in the year 1863.

69. From the Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

70. From the Sunday Matins Antiphon, Tone 4.

71. From the Matins Troparion in Passion Week.

72. From the Prayer of St Ephraim the Syrian.

73. St John may be alluding to Jonah 1:6 and 1 Thess 5:6.

74. From the First and Fourth Prayers before Holy Communion.

75. From the Akathist to the Sweetest Lord Jesus, Tone 3.

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